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A NOVEL OF THE

87TH

PRECINCT

ED McBAIN

"Ed McBain is,
by far, the best
at what he does.
Case closed."

—*People*

VESPER

VESPER
by
ED MCBAIN

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This is for ANNE EDWARDS AND STEVE CITRON

The city in these pages is imaginary. The people, the places are all
fictitious. Only the police routine is based on established
investigatory technique.

It was his custom to reflect upon worldly problems during evening
prayers, reciting the litany by rote, the prayers a mumbled counterp
to his silent thoughts.

The Priest.

At such times, he thought of himself as The Priest.

The T and the P capitalized. The Priest. As if by distancing himself this way, by referring to himself in the third person as if he were someone not quite himself... .. a character in a novel or a movie, perhaps... .. someone outside his own body, someone exalted and remote to be thought of with reverence as solely The Priest. By thinking of himself in this manner, by sorting out The Priest's problems as the problems of someone other than himself, Father Michael could... Because you see...

It was he, Father Michael, who could find comfort ... the hateful threats in the rectory... .. this is blackmail, blackmail... .. the pounding at the central portal doors... .. the black boy running in the church, seeking sanctuary, Hey man, help me, they want to kill me!

Blood running down his face. ... gone to ruin, all to ruin.

Graffiti on the massive stones of the church, barbarians on ponies storming the gates. Almost six weeks since all of that ... today was twenty-fourth of May, the day of Ascension all that time, almost six weeks, and he was still on his knees to... I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; now I leave the world to return to the Father, alleluia!

There was the sweet scent of roses on the evening air.

The roses were his pleasure and his vice, he tended them the way he tended the Lord's flock.

Something still and silent about tonight. Well, a Thursday. The name itself. Something dusky about the name, Thursday, as soft and silken as sunset.

Thursday.

God is rich in mercy; because of his great love for us... .. I'll tell I'll tell everything... The boy's blood dripping on the marble floor before the altar.

The vengeful cries echoed inside the church.

Still on his knees.

... by this favor are you saved. Both with and in Christ Jesus, he raised us up and gave us a place in the heavens.

Beyond the high stone walls of the garden, The Priest could see the sootied upper stories of the buildings across the street, and yet above those, beyond those, the sunset-streaked springtime sky.

The aroma of the roses was overpowering. As he moved past the big maple set exactly at the center of the garden, a stone bench circling it, he felt a sudden suffusion of love.., for the roses, for the glorious sunset, for the power of the words that soared silently in his prayer: God our Father, make us joyful in the ascension of your Son Jesus Christ, may we follow him into the new creation, for his ascension is our glory and our hope. He asked and noticed all at once that the gate the wall was open.

Standing wide.

The setting sun striking it so that it cast a long arched shadow that reached almost to the maple itself.

He had thought... Or surely, Martha would have... He moved swiftly to the gate, painted a bilious green by a tasteless long-ago priest, and yet again recently with red graffiti on the side facing the street.

The gate was wooden and some four inches thick, stone walls on either side of it, an architectural touch that further displeased The Priest's meticulous eye.

The narrow golden path of sun on the ground grew narrower yet as he swung the gate closed on its old wrought-iron hinges.., narrower.., narrower.., and then was gone entirely.

Alleluia, come let us worship Christ the Lord as he ascends into heaven... Alleluia! The lock on the gate was thoroughly modern.

He turned the thumb bolt.

There was a solid, satisfying click.

Give glory to the King of kings, sing praise to God, alleluia! He bent, he turned and was walking back toward the rectory, past the shadow-shrouded maple, when the knife... He felt only searing pain at first.

He did not realize until the second slashing blow... Knew then that he'd been stabbed... Turned... Was starting to turn...

And felt the knife entering again, lower this time, in the small of his back... Oh dear God... And again, and again, and again in savage fury. Oh Jesus, oh Jesus Christ...

As complete darkness claimed the garden.

Not a day went by without Willis expecting someone to come out about

her. The open house tonight was on the twelfth floor of a renovated building about to go co-op. There were a great many strangers here, and strangers were dangerous. Strangers asked questions. What do you do, Willis? And you, Miss. Hollis? Willis and Hollis, they sounded like law firm. Or perhaps a dance team. And now, ladies and gentlemen, returning from their recently completed tour of the glittering capit of Europe. we bring you... Willis... and Hollis!

The questions about himself were merely annoying; he wondered why everyone in America had to know immediately what everyone else in America did. He was sometimes tempted to say he sold crack to innoce schoolchildren. He wondered what sort of response that would get. Te them you're a cop, they looked at you with raised eyebrows. Oh, real Cut the crap and tell us what you really do. Really, I swear to God, a cop, Detective/Third Grade Harold O. Willis, that's me; I swear. Looking you over. Thinking you're too short to be a cop, a detective less, and ugly besides with your curly black hair and wet brown eyes let me see your badge. Show them the potsy. My, my, I never met a re live police detective before, do you work in one of those dreadful precincts we're always reading about, are you carrying a gun, have y ever killed anyone? The questions. Annoying, but not d angerous.

The questions they asked Marilyn were dangerous.

Because there was so much to hide.

Oh, not the fact that they were living together, this

was already the Nineties, man, nobody even thought about such things anymore. You got married by choice, and if you chose not to, then yo simply lived together. Had children together, if you could, did what you wanted, this was the Nineties. And perhaps.., in such a climate acceptance.., you could even.., well, perhaps.., but it was extremel unlikely. Well, who the hell knew? Maybe they could, after all, come right out and say, Look, people, Marilyn used to be a hooker.

The raised eyebrows again.

Oh, really? Cut the crap and tell us what she really did.

No, really, that's what she really did, I swear to God, she used to hooker. She did it for a year or so in Houston, and ended up in a Mexican prison on a dope charge, and then picked up the trade again Buenos Aires where she worked the streets for five years, more or le Really. That's what she used to do.

But who would believe it?

Because, you know, you looked at Marilyn, you

saw this woman who'd be only twenty-six in August, slender and tall, with long blonde hair and cornflower blue eyes and a complexion as flawlessly pale as a dipper of milk, and you thought No, not a hooker. You didn't survive being a hooker. You didn't come off six years of peddling tail - . not to mention the time in that Mexican hellhole, and look like this. You just didn't. Unless you were Marilyn. Then you'd Marilyn was a survivor.

She was also a murderess.

That was the thing of it.

You opened the hooker can of peas, and everything else came spilling out.

The cocktail party was in a twelfth-floor corner apartment, what the real estate lady kept calling the penthouse apartment, although Will didn't think it looked luxurious enough to warrant such a lofty title.

He had been in court all day long and had come up here against his better judgment, at the invitation of Bob O'Brien who said there'd be good booze and plenty to eat and besides neither of them would run the risk of getting shot, a distinct possibility if ever you were partnered with a hard-luck cop like O'Brien.

He'd called Marilyn to tell her that O'Brien's girlfriend Maizie - who turned out to be as ditsy as her name would be coming along, and may the four of them could go out to dinner later, and Marilyn had said, sure, why not? So here they were with the sun just gone, listening to the real estate lady pitching renovated apartments to supposedly interested prospects like O'Brien who, Willis discovered for the first time tonight, planned to marry Maizie in the not-too-distant future, lots of luck, pal.

It was Maizie who looked like a hooker.

She wasn't. She worked as a clerk in the D.A.'s office.

But she was wearing a fuzzy pink sweater slashed in a V over reckless endangered breasts, and a tight shiny black skirt that looked like a thin coating of crude oil, and high-heeled, ankle-strapped black patent leather pumps, a hooker altogether, except that she had a tiny little girl's voice and she kept talking about having gone to high school a

Mother Mary Magdalene or some such in Calm's Point.

The real estate lady was telling Willis that the penthouse apartment the one they were standing in this very moment, was going for only three-fifty negotiable, at a fixed eight-and-a-quarter percent mortgage with no points and no closing fees. Willis wondered if he should tell her that he was presently living in a town house uptown that had cost Marilyn seven hundred and fifty thousand-dollars. He wondered if there'd be any former hookers living in this fine renovated building.

In her high, piping voice, Maizie was telling someone that a nun named Sister Letitia used to hit her on her hands with a ruler.

O'Brien was looking as if he expected to get shot at any moment, Mar wondered out loud how such a reasonable mortgage rate could be offered in this day and age.

The real estate lady told her that the sponsor was a bank in Minnesota which meant nothing at all to Willis. Then she said, "What do you do Mrs. Willis?"

"It's Hollis," Marilyn said.

"I thought..." She turned to Willis. "Didn't you say your name was Willis?"

"Yes, but mine is Hollis," Marilyn said. "We're not married."

"Oh."

"The names are similar, though," Willis explained helpfully.

"And are you in police work, too, Miss. Hollis?"

"No, I'm a student," Marilyn said.

Which was the truth.

"My education was interrupted," she said.

And did not amplify.

"What are you studying?"

All smiles, all solicitous interest; these were potential customers.

"Well, eventually, I want to be a social worker," Marilyn said. "But right now, I'm just going for my

bachelor' s."

All true.

"I wanted to be a doctor," the real estate lady said, .and looked at Willis. "But I got married instead," she added, as if blaming him fo her misfortune.

Willis smiled apologetically. Then ha trn, t, O'Brien and said, "Bob you plan on staying a while longer, maybe me and Marilyn'll just run along, okay?"

O'Brien seemed to be enjoying the warm white wine and cold canap6s.

"See you tomorrow," he said.

"Nice to meet you," Maizie said to Marilyn.

The church garden was crowded now with two ambulance attendants, thr technicians from the Mobile Crime Unit, an assistant medical examine two detectives from Homicide, a woman from the Photo Unit, and a uniformed Deputy Inspector from Headquarters. The D.I. was here beca the police department in this city was largely Irish-Catholic, and the victim was a priest.

Detective Stephen Louis Carella looked out at the assembled law enforcement officers, and tried to remember the last time he'd been inside a church.

His sister's wedding, wasn't it? He was inside a church now. But not pray. Well, not even technically inside a church, although the recto was connected to the church via a wood-paneled corridor that led into the sacristy and then the old stone building itself.

He looked through the open rectory doorway and out into the garden w roses bloomed in medieval splendor. Such a night. On the paved garde floor, the priest lay as if dressed in mourning, wearing the black o his trade, festooned now with multiple stab and slash wounds that outrioted the roses banked against the old stone walls. A small frow creased Carella's forehead. To end this way, he thought. As rubble. such a night. He kept looking out into the garden where the crowd of suits and blues fussed and fluttered about the corpse.

Carella gave the impression even standing motionless with his hands his pockets of a trained athlete, someone whose tall, slender body c respond gracefully and effortlessly to whatever demands were placed it. His appearance was a lie. Everybody forgot that middle age was

really thirtysomething. Ask a man in his mid-to-late thirties if he was middle-aged, and he'd say Don't be ridiculous. But then take your ten-year-old son out back to the garage and try to play one-on-one basketball with him. There was a look of pain on Carella's face now perhaps because he had a splitting headache, or perhaps because he always reacted in something close to pain when he saw the stark results of brutal violence. The pain seemed to draw his dark, slanting eyes further downward, giving them a squinched, exaggerated, Oriental look. Turn a group photograph upside down, and you could always pick out Carella by the slanting eyes - the exact opposite of almost anyone else in the picture.

"Steve?"

He turned from the open doorway.

Cotton Hawes was leading the housekeeper back in.

Her name was Martha Hennessy, and she'd become ill not five minutes. That is to say, she'd thrown up. Carella had asked one of the ambulance crew to take her outside, see what he could do for her. She was back now, the smell of her vomit still lingering in the rectory, battling supremacy over the aroma of roses wafting in from outside. She seemed all right now. A bit pale, but Carella realized this was her natural coloration. Bright red hair, white skin, the kind of woman who would turn lobster red in the sun. Green eyes. County Roscommon all over her. Fifty-five years old or thereabouts, wearing a simple blue dress and sensible low-heeled shoes.

She'd told them earlier that she'd found Father Michael in the garden; she'd come out to fetch him for dinner. That was at a little after seven tonight, fifteen minutes before she'd started throwing up. It was now seven-forty; the police had been here for ten minutes.

"I sent one of the blues out for coffee," Hawes said. "Mrs. Hennessy said she might like some coffee." "Actually," she said, "I asked Mr. Hawes if I could make some coffee. We've got a perfectly good stove.

"Yes, but..." "Yes," Carella said, almost simultaneously, "but the technicians will be working in there." "That's what Mr. Hawes told me. But I don't see why I can't make my own coffee. I don't see why we have to send out for coffee."

Hawes looked at her.

He had explained to her, twice, that this entire place was a crime scene. That the killer might have been anywhere inside the church or

rectory before the murder. That the killer might even have been in the priest's small office, where one of the file cabinet drawers was open and papers presumably removed from that drawer were strewn all over the floor. Now the woman was questioning, for the third time, why she could not use the priest's kitchen. Where, among other utensils, there were great many knives. He knew he had adequately explained why she could use the kitchen or anything in the kitchen. So how had he failed to communicate?

He stood in red-headed perplexity, a six-foot-two-inch, hundred-and-ninety-pound, solidly built man who dwarfed the Hennessy woman, searching for something to say that would clarify why they did not want her using the kitchen.

There was an unruly white streak of hair over his left temple, a souvenir from a slashing years ago while he was investigating a burglary. It gave his haircut a somewhat fearsome Bride of Frankenstein look, which, when coupled with the consternation on his face - made it appear as if he might throttle the little housekeeper within the next several seconds, a premise entirely distant from the truth. Side by side, the two red-heads stood, one huge and seemingly menacing, the other tiny and possibly confused, a blazing torch and a glowing ember.

Carella looked at both of them, not knowing Hawes had already explained the sanctity of the kitchen to her • twice not knowing why Hawes was looking at her so peculiarly, and beginning to feel a bit stupid for understanding what the hell was going on. Outside in the garden, the priest lay on blood-stained stones, his blood still seeping from the tattered wounds in his back. It was such a lovely night.

Getting away from the matter of the goddam kitchen, Hawes said, "When did you last see Father Birney alive?"

"Father Michael," she said.

"Well, his name is Michael Birney, isn't it?" Hawes said.

"Yes," Mrs. Hennessy said, "but you can have a priest named... well, take Father O'Neill as used to be the pastor here. His name was Ralph O'Neill, but everybody called him Father O'Neill. Whereas Father Michael's name is Michael Birney, but everyone calls him Father Michael. That's the mystery of it."

"Yes, that's the great mystery of it," Hawes agreed.

"When did you last see him alive?" Carella asked gently. "Father Michael, that is." Slow and easy, he told himself. If she's truly a stupid woman, getting angry isn't going to help either her or the

situation. If she's just scared, then hold her hand. There's a dead outside in the garden.

"When you last saw him alive," he prompted.

"The time. What time was it?" "A bit past seven," she said. "When I to fetch him for dinner." "Yes," Carella said, "but he was already d by then, isn't that what you said?"

"Yes, God ha'mercy," she said, and hastily made the sign of the cros

"When did you last see him alive ? Before that."

"When Krissie was leaving," she said.

"Krissie?"

"Yes."

"Who's Krissie?"

"His secretary."

"And she left at what time?"

"Five. She leaves at five."

"And she left at five tonight?"

"Yes."

"And that's the last time you saw Father Michael alive?"

"Yes, when Krissie was leaving. He was saying good night to her."

"Where was this, Mrs. Hennessy?"

"In his study. I went in to clear the tea things.., he takes tea in afternoon, after he says his three o'clock prayers. Krissie was just going out the door, he was sayin' I'll see you in the morning."

"Krissie who?" Hawes asked.

"Krissie who's his secretary," Mrs. Hennessy said.

"Yes, but what's her full name?"

"Krisfin."

"And her last name?"

"Lund. Krisfin Lund."

"Does she work here full time?"

"No, only Tuesdays and Thursdays. Twice a week."

"And you? How often do... ?"

"Who gets the coffee?" a uniformed cop asked.

"Here's your coffee, Mrs. Hennessy," Hawes said, and took the cardboard container from him.

"Thank you," she said, and then, quite suddenly, "It was the Devil who done it."

The only problem was that Willis loved her to death.

It bothered him day and night that he loved a woman who'd killed someone. A pimp, yes a fucking miserable pimp, as a matter of fact but a human being, nonetheless, if any pimp could be considered human. He never met a pimp he'd liked, but for that matter, he'd never met a hooker with a heart of gold, either. Marilyn was no longer a hooker when he met her, so she didn't count.

She had been a hooker, however, when she'd killed Alberto Hidalgo, a Buenos Aires pimp who by then had been living off the proceeds of prostitution for almost fifty years. In addition to Marilyn, there'd been six other whores in his stable. He was hated by each and every one of them, but by none so fiercely as Marilyn herself, whom he'd casually subjected first to an abortion and next to a hysterectomy performed by one and the same back-alley butcher.

So here was Willis a police officer sworn to protect and enforce the laws of the city, state, and nation in love with a former hooker, a confessed murderess, and an admitted thief, not necessarily in that order. Only two other people in this entire city knew that Marilyn Hollis had once been a prostitute: Lieutenant Peter Byrnes and Detective Steve Carella. Willis knew that the secret was safe with either of them. But neither of them knew that she was also a killer and a thief. Willis alone had heard that little confession, he alone was the one to whom she'd... "I did. I killed him."

"I don't want to hear it. Please. I don't want to hear it."

"I thought you wanted the truth."

"I'm a cop. If you killed a man..."

"I didn't kill a man, I killed a monster! He ripped out my insides, can't have babies, do you understand that? He stole my..."

"Please, please, please, Marilyn..."

"I'd kill him again. In a minute."

She'd used cyanide. Hardly the act of someone with a heart of gold. Cyanide. For rats.

And then... "I went into his bedroom and searched for the combination to the safe because that was where my passport had to be. I found the combination. I opened the safe. My passport was in it. And close to million dollars in Argentine money."

On the night she'd confessed all this to Willis, a night that now seems so very long ago, she'd asked,

"So what now? Do you turn me in?"

He had not known what to say.

He was a cop.

He loved her.

"Do they know you killed him?" he'd asked.

"Who? The Argentine cops? Why would even give a damn about a dead pig? But, yes, the only one who split from the stable, yes, and the safe open, and a lot of bread was gone, so yes, they probably figured I was the perpetrator, is that the word you use?"

"Is there a warrant out for your arrest?"

"I don't know."

And there had been a silence.

"So what are you going to do?" she'd asked, "Phone Argentina? Ask them if there's a one on Mary Ann Hollis, a person I don't even know anymore? What? Hal? For Christ's sake, I love you, want to live with you forever, I love you, Jesus, love you, what are you going to do?"

"I don't know," he'd said.

He was still a cop.

And he still loved her.

But every time that telephone rang, he broke out in a cold sweat, hoping it would not be some police inspector in Buenos Aires, telling him they had traced a murder to the city here and were planning to extradite a woman named Marilyn Hollis.

It was easy to forget your fears on a night like tonight. It was easy to forget that some problems might never go away.

At a little past ten o'clock, the city was ablaze with light. For all Willis knew, this could have been springtime in Paris: he'd never been there. But it felt like Paris, and it most certainly felt like spring. The balmyest spring he could ever remember. As he and Marilyn came out of the restaurant, a soft, fragrant breeze wafted in off Grover Park. Both of them smiled. He hailed a passing taxi and told the driver to take the park road uptown. They were still smiling.

The windows were down. They held hands like teenagers.

Harborside Lane, where Marilyn owned the town house, was within the confines of the 87th Precinct, not quite as desirable as Silvermine Oval, but a very good neighborhood anyway - at least when one considered the rest of the precinct territory. Number 1211 was in a row of brownstones adorned with visible spray-can scribbles. A wrought-iron gate to the right of the building guarded the entrance to a driveway that led to a garage set some fifty feet back from the pavement; the gate was padlocked.

There were wrought-iron grilles on the ground-floor and first-floor windows, and razor wire on the roof overhanging the third floor. There were now two names in the directory set beside the bell button: M. Hollis and H. Willis.

Willis paid the driver and tipped him extravagantly; it was that kind of night. Marilyn was unlocking the front door as the taxi pulled away from the curb. It turned the corner and vanished from sight, the sound of engine fading, fading, and then disappearing entirely. For an instant the street, the small park across the way, were utterly still. Willis took a deep breath and looked up at the sky. Stars blinked overhead. Pinocchio night. He expected

Jiminy Cricket to come hopping up the sidewalk.

"Hal?"

He turned.

"Aren't you coming in?"

"It's so beautiful," he said.

He would later remember that these were the last words he'd said before the telephone rang. The last words before the terror started.

He went into the house and closed and locked the door behind him. The entry foyer and the living room beyond were paneled in mahogany. Old thick wooden beams crossed the ceiling. Marilyn began unbuttoning her blouse as she climbed the

walnut-banistered staircase to the second story.

Willis was crossing the living room, yanking down his tie and unbuttoning the top button of his shirt, when the telephone rang.

He looked automatically at his watch, walked to the phone on the drop-leaf desk, and picked up the receiver.

"Hello?" he said.

There was a slight hesitation.

Then a man's voice said, "Perd6neme, seor."

And then there was an empty click.

The altar was naked.

The altar was a twenty-seven-year-old woman who lay on her back on an elevated platform shaped as a trapezoid and covered with black velvet. Her head was at the narrow end of the trapezoid, her long blonde hair cushioned on a pillow covered with black silk. White against black, she lay with her legs widespread and dangling over the wide end of the platform, her arms at her sides, her eyes closed.

Lying between her naked breasts was a thick silver disc on a heavy silver chain, sculpted in relief with the Sacred Sign of Baphomet, the Black Goat, whose image hung on the wall behind her as well, its horns, ears, face and beard contained within the center and five points of inverted pentagram:

Smoke from the torches illuminating this symbol swirled upward toward the arched ceiling of the abandoned church. Smoke from the candle clutched in the hands of the woman who was altar drifted up toward old wooden beams that long ago had crossed over an altar made not of flesh or marble.

The mass had started at the stroke of midnight.

Now, at a little past one A.M., the priest between the spread legs of the altar, facing celebrants, his back to the woman. He was wearing black cotton robe embroidered in richer black with pine cones that formed a phallic pattern. robe was slit to the waist on either side, revealing priest's muscular legs and thighs.

The celebrants were here to mark the day of Expulsion. Some twenty minutes earlier, during Canon segment, they had each and separately partaken of the contents of a silver chalice offered the priest. The chalice had tonight contained not red wine symbolic of the blood of Christ, but something called Ecstasy, a hallucinogenic drug that was potent mix of mescaline and speed, A capsule of Ecstasy sold for two dollars. There were at least two hundred people here tonight, most of them young, and each and every one of them had swallowed a cap of X immediately after the conclusion of the third segment of the mass.

Kissing the altar/woman full on her genitals, the priest had recited timeless words, "Stan is Lord of the Temple, Lord of the World, he bringeth to me joyous youth, all praise Satan, all hail Satan!" and celebrants had responded "All hail Satan!" and the girl acolyte had to the altar and raised her garments to the priest, revealing herself naked beneath them. The boy acolyte had held a silver container to catch her urine, and the priest had dipped a phallus-shaped aspergill into the container and sprinkled the celebrants with the little girl's urine thou hast thirst, then let thee come to the Lord Satan. If thou would partake of the water of life, the Infernal Lord doth offer it. And then he had passed among them with the chalice containing the Ecstasy capsules, and they had washed the caps down with thick red wine offered by the deacon and one of the sub-deacons, sixty-one people times twenty bucks a pop came to twelve hundred and change, The girl acolyte stood the right of the altar now.

She was a darling little blonde girl, all of eight

years old, whose mother was tonight serving as the altar. She was dressed entirely in black, as was her father who was sitting among the other stoned celebrants and feeling enormously proud of the separate important roles his wife and daughter were playing in tonight's ritual. The boy acolyte was only seven. He was standing to the left of the altar/woman, staring a bit wide-eyed at the tufted blonde patch above the joining of her legs. The priest was about to embark upon the fifth and final segment of the mass, called the Repudiation, the significant tonight in that this twenty-fourth day of May was what the Christians had named the Ascension, upon which day the body of Jesus was supposed to have risen to Heaven, but here within these walls was being celebrated as expulsion of Jesus from Hell.

The priest had been supplied with a consecrated at a church in another part of the city, stolen this morning at mass by a woman whose mouth first been coated with alum protect the wafer from her own saliva. He held wafer between the thumb and forefinger of his hand now, made a deep, mocking bow over it, said, "I show you the body of Jesus Christ Forgotten One, pretender to the throne of monarch to slaves, confound of minions to perdition."

He turned to face the altar/woman, his back to celebrants now, his right hand raised in the sign, his left hand holding the wafer aloft to the goat symbol on the wall.

"All hail Satan!" he said.

"Hail, Satan!" the celebrants responded.

"All praise these splendid breasts that gave suck to the body of Jesus," he said mockingly, and touched the wafer first to the woman's right nipple and then to her left nipple. Kneeling between her legs, he held the hand with the wafer on her mons veneris, and said, again mocking "Blessed be the generous womb that begat the body of Jesus," and passed the host over the lips of her vagina.

Now began the Repudiation in earnest.

Lifting the hems of his robe, fastening them into the black silken cord at his waist, he wet the fingers of his right hand and then touched to the head of his now-erect penis. "Jesus Christ, messenger of doom, I offer you to worm and maggot..." he said, touching the wafer to the moistened head of his penis where it clung in desecration, moving close to the widespread legs of the altar, the boy acolyte watching excited and amazed, "thrust you down with scorpion and snake..." approaching altar where she waited open and spread for him, "show you storm and savage strife, curse you with famine and filth, burn you in eternal fire cause you everlasting death to the end of time unending, and reward with the enduring fury of our Lord, Satan!"

"Hail, Satan!" the celebrants chanted. "All hail Hurling himself onto altar, thrusting himself into the woman, wafer and penis entering the priest said, "I descend anew, and ascend forever, saith the Infernal Lord. My flesh is your flesh..."

"My flesh is thy flesh," the woman murmured.

"My flesh is our flesh..."

"Thy flesh is our flesh," the celebrants intoned.

"In flesh, let us find the glory of Satan!"

"In flesh, find the glory of Satan!"

"In lust, let us know the goodness of Satan!"

"In lust, know the goodness of Satan!"

"In flesh and in lust, let us all praise Satan!"

"In flesh and in lust, we praise Satan's name!"

"Blessed be Satan!"

"Blessed be Satan!"

"All hail Satan!"

"Hail, Satan!"

This was four blocks away from where the police had chalked Father Michael's outline onto the blood-stained stones in the small church garden.

The two men were speaking entirely in Spanish.

One of them was exceedingly handsome. Tall and slender, with black hair combed straight back from a pronounced widow's peak, he looked a lot like Rudolph Valentino. He did not know who Rudolph Valentino was, and so he wasn't flattered when people told him he looked like Rudolph Valentino.

But he guessed that Rudolph Valentino had to be some handsome hombre because if there was one thing Ramon Castaneda knew for certain it was that he himself was handsome as sin.

The man sitting with him was named Carlos Ortega and he was exceptionally ugly. He had crooked teeth and a nose that had been broken often in street fights hither and yon, and a scar that ran through his right eyebrow and partially closed his right eye, and moreover he was bald and hulking and resembled an escaped inmate from a hospital for criminally insane, which he was not. But such was the vanity of men, he, too, thought he was handsome. In fact, many women had told him he was handsome. He believed them, even if all of them were hookers.

On this twenty-fifth day of May, another spring morning, the two men sat in a coffee shop close to their hotel, discussing why they were here in the city. It was still early in the morning, a little seven; the place was full of people catching breakfasts before going to work. The two men

in no hurry. The handsome one, Ramon, had steak and eggs for breakfast. Carlos, the ugly who only thought he was handsome, had pancakes and sausage. They sat sipping their waiting for the food to come, chattily.

Ramon said in Spanish that he thought it pity a man had answered the telephone last night. man might complicate matters.

Carlos said in Spanish that he could break fucking bone in the man's body, whoever he was. what difference did it make if she was living with a man, a woman, or a chihuahua?

"If she's the right woman," Ramon said.

"Well, yes, we have to make sure she's the right woman," Carlos said.

"Which won't be easy without a photograph."

"But we have her description from the whore."

The German whore was a buxom blonde claimed she'd been openly abducted in Munich.

name was Constantia. While they waited for their food, the two men discussed whether or not she was reliable. Ramon mentioned that she'd been a drug addict for many years. Carlos said he knew many people who were drug addicts who nonetheless made very reliable witnesses. They sidetracked wondering if she was a good lay. When their food came, they fell silent for a while, Ramon eating with the exquisite table manners of a man who knew he was devastatingly handsome, Carlos eating like a brute who believed that handsome men like himself could eat any fuck way they wanted to.

"You think she could be so stupid?" Ramon asked.

"How do you mean?"

"To put her name in the book?" "It says only M. Hollis," Carlos said. "Also, there are twenty-eight Hollises in the book."

"But only one M. Hollis."

"True. How's the steak?"

"Ours are better."

He was referring to Argentine beef; a bit of national pride there. But Carlos noticed that he was enjoying it. The pancakes he himself had ordered were only so-so. He wondered why he'd ordered pancakes, anyway;

he didn't even like pancakes.

"So what we have to do," Ramon said, "is go up there and take a look : "She could have changed what she looks like, you Carlos said.

"Yes, women can do that," Ramon said wearily, an observation a hands man familiar with strange and wonderful ways of women could in utter boredom.

"She could be a redhead by now," Carlos said "Or a brunette. Never m the blonde. The could be history by now."

"We can always look under her skirt," said, and smiled confidently.

"She could have changed it there, too. Or shaw it like a baby's. She could be an entirely woman by now." "The blue eyes, she can't change Ramon said.

"She can wear contacts to make them green brown or purple. A woman c change about herself. We could go up there, it could be same woman, we wouldn't recognize her."

"So what are you saying?" Ramon asked. shouldn't go up there?"

"We should go, we should go. But we shouldn't be disappointed if we at her, and she doesn't the German whore's description. Who, by the have been lying, anyway."

"Why would she have lied?"

"For the money. We gave her money."

"With the promise of more."

"If we locate the Hollis woman. If that's even name."

"The German whore says that was her Mary Ann Hollis."

"So then why is there only an. 'M' in the phone book?"

"Because if a woman puts an. 'M.A.' in the phone book, a man immedia knows it's a woman," Ramon said.

"So if you put J. F. Kennedy in the phone book, it means it's a woma correct?" Carlos said.

"Well, I don't know why she put only an. 'M' in the phone book," Ram admitted. "Maybe in this

country it's cheaper than using two initials ."

Carlos looked at him.

"Why do you think she put only an. 'M'?" Ramon asked.

"Because, one, it could be the wrong woman... "Well, of course, but.

"Or, two, it could be that the man who answered the phone is the one who's listed in the book, it's a Mr. M. Hollis..."

"No, it's only women who use initials," Ramon said.

"Or, three, she could have changed her name," Carlos said.

"That's true. But then why use an. 'M'? Why not change it completely

"Even with an. 'M,' it could be changed :Completely," Carlos said. "Mary Ann, she yould have changed it completely to Magdalena or s or Malta or..."

He was an Argentine, and so all these names were , naturally.

"... Matilda or Maurita or Mirabella or or Modesta or..." "I think I the point," Ramon said.

"What I'm saying," Carlos said, "is we uptown, we find a curly-haired red-

head with big and a fat ass and brown eyes and her name is Margarita and we think we have the wrong but instead it's really Mary Ann Holl who upon a time was tall and thin and had blue eyes straight blonde hair, is what I'm saying."

"So we have to be careful, is what you're saying."

"No, I'm saying we may have to beat the shit of her," Carlos said.

"Well, of course," Ramon said, as if it without saying that all wome had to have the beat out of them every now and then.

"If she tells us she's not who we think she is.

Carlos said.

"Yes," Ramon said.

"To find out who she really is, is what saying," Carlos said.

"I agree with you entirely."

"So when do you want to go'?" "Let me finish my steak," Ramon said.

"You eat more slowly than any person I know."

"Because I was born rich," Ramon said. "Only poor eat quickly. For f someone will snatch food away before they're finished ."

"You were born rich, ha!" Carlos said.

"Yes, I was born rich, ha!" Ramon mimicked.

"What I want to do," Carlos said, "I want to be waiting when she comes out of the building. We take it slow and easy. Follow her, see where she goes, what she does. We make our move when we're ready to make it. A not near a house where a man answers the phone." He looked at the remaining bit of steak on Ramon's plate. "Now hurry up and finish, r man," he said. "Because you'll be even richer once she gives us the money."

"Sin duda," Ramon said.

Kristin Lund looked exactly like her name. Blonde hair and blue eyes full tempestuous mouth, and a figure that reminded Hawes of the gentle sloping hills of Sweden, where he'd never been. Kristin Lund. Krissi sounded closer to home and just as beautiful. Krissie Lund. It rolled off the tongue like a balalaika riff. On this fine spring morning, she was wearing a pastel blue skirt, high-heeled pumps of the same subtle shade, and lemon-colored pantyhose that matched her lemon-colored sweater. Krissie.

She looked very much like spring. She smelled a lot like spring, too. Hawes was not mistaken, she was wearing Poison.

She was not surprised to find two detectives on her doorstep so early in the morning; she had heard about Father Michael's murder late last night, on on. In fact, she had called 911 at once, to ask she could get in touch with whoever would be investigating the case. The woman who answered the phone said, "What is the emergency, Miss. When Krissie told her there was no emergency, woman asked, "Do you wish to report a crime'?

Krissie told her No, she didn't wish to report a but she worked for a man whose murder she'd heard reported on television and she wanted to see who'd be handling the case so she could talk to them. The woman on the other end said, moment, please, I'll give you my supervisor." supervisor came and immediately said, "do you understand you witnessed a murder," Krissie said, even if she was not a native of city.

"But I did try to contact you," she said, and

so dazzlingly that Hawes almost swooned.

"When was this?" Carella asked.

"When?"

"When you tried to contact us."

"Oh. Right after the Eleven O'Clock News. I going to call the church but I called 911 And then, after I spoke to that supervisor, I know to do. So I went to sleep. I figured get to me sooner or later." "Ye Hawes said.

"So here you are," she said, and smiled again.

"Miss. Lund," Carella said, "Father housekeeper..."

"Yes, Martha Hennessy."

"Yes, told us that the last time she saw him alive was when he was saying good night to you."

"That's the last time I saw him, too."

"At about five o'clock yesterday."

"Yes."

"Where did you go after that?"

"I came straight here."

They were in the kitchen of her small apartment on the fourth floor building downtown in The Quarter, far from the precinct territory. Coffee was brewing in a pot plugged into an outlet above a butcher block counter. Krissie leaned against the counter, her arms folded, waiting for the coffee to perk. She had set out three cups and saucers near coffeepot. The detectives stood by the open window.

A mild breeze fluttered the sheer white curtains on the window. Sunbeams danced on the counter top, setting the bone white cups and saucers aglitter.

Krissie lifted the pot and poured the three cups full.

She carried them one at a time to a small round table near the window. The table was already set with teaspoons, paper napkins, a creamer, a small bowl containing pink packets of a sugar substitute.

"Did you see anyone suspicious-looking outside the church?" Carella asked. "When you left last "Well, what do you mean by suspicious-looking? mean... I guess you know that's a pretty rotten . I mean, no offense, I know you guys do a good job. But to me, everyone there looks suspicious."

"I was referring to anyone lurking about..."

Those words always made him feel foolish. "... anyone who seemed out place..."

Those words, too.

"... anyone who just didn't belong there," he said.

"Just the usual," Krissie said, and shrugged.

Hawes loved the way she shrugged. "Milk?" she asked. "It's skim."

"By the usual... ?" Hawes asked.

"The usual," she said, and shrugged again. "I'm sure you know what's there. The usual street mix.

Crack dealers and buyers, hookers, hoodlums, the mix." She lifted her cup, sipped at the coffee.

"And last night, when you left.., nothing but the mix."

"Just the mix."

"How about inside the church?" Carella asked.

"See anything strange there? Anything out of the normal?"

"No."

"When you left the, office.., this was at five, you say?"

"Five, a little bit after."

"Were any of the file cabinets open?"

"They're never locked. We have keys, but..."

"No, I mean, were any of the drawers standing open?"

"Any papers on the floor?"

"No. Of course not."

"Everything neat and orderly."

"Yes."

"Miss. Lund," Hawes said, "Father Michael's housekeeper mentioned that in recent weeks he'd been taking a strong church stand against..."

"Well, you don't think that had anything to do with his murder, do you?"

"What are you referring to?"

"The tithe."

"The tide?" Carella asked, puzzled.

"Tithe," she said, "tithe. The congregation is supposed to contribute ten percent of its earnings to the church. As a tithe. Aren't you familiar with that word? Tithe."

"Well, yes, it's just..."

He was thinking the word sounded medieval. He was thinking it did not sound like a word that should be lurking about in the here and now, a word that seemed out of place, a word that just didn't belong in this day and age. Tithe. Altogether archaic. Like a chastity belt. But he did not say this.

"What about this..., tithe?" he asked.

"Well, she probably meant the sermons."

"What sermons?"

"Some pretty stiff sermons about shortchanging the church."

"Shortchanging?"

"I see. How many of these sermons were there?" "Three. I know because I heard the one who preached them. All hellfire and brimstone. Unusual for Michael. He was normally..."

She hesitated.

"A very gentle man," she said at last.

"But not in these sermons," Hawes said.

"No. I suppose..., well, the church really is in of repair, hardly

anything's been done to it in And, you know, the neighborhood around church may be falling apart, but a lot of parishioners come from five six blocks away, things are much better. Well, you know this you'll find a slum right next door to buildings doormen. So he really was within rights to ask the proper tithe. Because, honestly, I think neighborhood would be even worse by now if wasn't for the work Father Michael does there. there," she said, correcting herself.

"What sort of work?" Carella asked.

"Well, trying to promote harmony," she "especially among the kids. In this neighborhood there is a mix of Italian, Irish, Hispanic and well, what am I telling, you? Father Michael works with those kids. I'm sure something has happened there on Easter Sunday..."

Carella shook his head.

So did Hawes.

"Well, it's your precinct," Kfissie said, "I don't you know what happened there? On Easter Sunday?"

"No, what happened there?" Carella asked, and tried to remember what he'd had the duty on Easter Sunday.

"Tiffs was late in the afternoon," Krissie said, "tiffs black kid came running into the church with his head all bloody. Half a dozen white kids were chasing him with stickball bats and garbage can covers, chased him into the church, fought up the center aisle to the altar. Father Michael stood his ground. Told them to get out of his church. Walked them fight up the aisle to the door, escorted them out, told them not to come back until they knew how to behave in the house of God. I don't know who the kids were, neighborhood kids, I'm sure the incident is in your records, just look up Easter Sunday.

Anyway, that's the kind of thing I mean. Father Michael was a meanin' force in that neighborhood. His congregation should have realized that. Instead of getting so offended. By the errnons, I mean."

"The money sermons," Carella said.

"The tithe sermons, yes," Krissie said.

"Some of his parishioners were offended by "Yes. By him calling the congregation.., well, , in effect."

"I see."

"From the pulpit."

"I see."

"One of the parishioners, I forget his distributed a letter that said Jesus had driven money-changers from the temple and here they back again.., he was referring to Father you know. And the tithe sermons.

"They must have been pretty strong Hawes said.

"Well, no stronger than the cult sermons. I those, too." "What cult sermons?" Carella asked.

"About the Church of the Bomless One."

"What's the Church of the Bornless One?"

"You mean you don't.., come on, you're me. It's right in the precinct Only four blocks St. Catherine's."

Hawes was wondering if Krissie Lund had thought of becoming a cop.

"I take it that the Church of the Bomless One some kind of cult," he said.

"Devil.worship," Krissie said.

"And you're saying that Father Michael some sermons about..."

"About Satan being worshipped within a throw of St. Catherine's, yes
"Then that's what she was talking about," said, to Carella. "The housekeeper."

Carella nodded.

He reached into his jacket, took out his and removed a photograph from the front-cover "Ever see this before?" he asked, and handed the picture to Krissie.

The picture had been taken last night, by a police photographer using Polaroid with a flash. Her exposure had been a bit off, and so the red wasn't as true as the actual red of the paint the graffiti artist had used, nor was the green of the gate quite as bilious.

But it was a good picture nonetheless.

Krissie studied it carefully:

"What's it supposed to be?" she asked.

"Ever go around to the Tenth Street side of the "Yes?"

"Past the garden gate?"

"Yes?"

"This is what's painted on that gate."

"I'm sorry, I never noticed it," she said, and the photo, back. "Does it mean something?"

Carella was thinking it meant that Satan was worshipped within a stone throw of St. Catherine's church, where a black kid had sought sanctuary from an angry white gang on East Sunday, and where an offended parishioner circulated a letter about money-changers in temple. He was thinking that in the world of the Precinct, far uptown, any one of these things could be considered a reasonable cause for murder.

"Excuse me, Miss. Lund," Hawes asked, "but is that Poison?" "No," Krissie said, apparently knowing what he was talking about. "It's Opium."

She had trained herself never to respond to the name Mary Ann.

So when she heard the voice behind her speaking Spanish, using the name she'd had the moment she'd come to this city, she kept right walking, paying no attention to it. She was not Ann. She was certainly not Marianna speaking Spanish.

And then the voice said, "Ai, Mariucha," was the Spanish diminutive of Mary. She had called Mariucha in the Mexican prison. The nickname had followed her to Buenos Aires. Apparently here to this city as well. She was walking. Her heart was pounding.

"Mariucha, despacio," the voice said, and men fell into step beside her, one on either side of her.

"Get away from me," she said at once, "or I'll yell for a cop."

"Oh, dear," the handsome one said in Spanish.

"We don't want to hurt you," the ugly one said in Spanish.

Which meant he did want to hurt her, and would hurt her.

There was a switchblade knife in her handbag.

She was prepared to use it if she had to.

They were coming up Concord, walking away from the cluster of buildings

that in a city this size passed for a campus. The school was familiar known as The Thousand Window Bakery, a reference too historically relevant for Marilyn to understand, but accurate enough in that the university complex seemed to be fashioned entirely glass. This was almost smack the center of the that was Isola, equidistant from the rivers to the north and south, only slightly closer to old Seawall downtown than to the Riverhead all the way uptown. The neighborhood was a good one. Plenty of shops and restaurants, theaters, apartment buildings with doormen

there ahead on the corner a pair of 5 cops basking in the spring sunshine.

"Don't do anything foolish," the handsome one in Spanish.

She walked directly to the policemen.

"These men are bothering me," she said.

The cops looked at the two men.

The handsome one smiled.

The ugly one shrugged.

Neither of them said a word. They seemed to recognize that if they opened their mouths in this and either Spanish or broken English came out, they'd be in serious trouble.

Marilyn kept waiting for the cops to do something.

The cops kept looking at the two men.

They were both well-dressed. Dark suits. White shirts. A red tie on one of them, a blue tie on the other. Both wearing pearl grey fedoras. Very Ver elegant-looking. Two legitimate gentlemen enjoying a fine spring day.

"Guys," one of the cops said, "the lady wishes to be bothered." He said this in the fraternal tone that men use when they are suggesting to other men that nice piece of ass here and we could all handily enjoy our pleasure here were we of a mind to, but out of the goodness and generosity of our masculine let's not bother the lady if she does not wish to be bothered. Hmmhh? Marilyn almost expected him to wink at the handsome one and nudge the ugly one in the ribs.

The handsome one shrugged, as if to say all men of the world who understand the value of women.

The ugly one sighed heavily, as if to say we are all occasionally burdened by these beautiful, unpredictable creatures, especially at

certain times of the month. Then he took the handsome one's arm, and him away quickly and silently.

"Okay?" the cop asked Marilyn.

She said nothing.

The ugly one was looking back at her.

There was a chilling promise in his eyes.

All of the windows in the station house were open.

The barred windows on the ground-floor level, the grilled windows on the upper stories. It suddenly occurred to Carella that a police station looked like a prison. Even with the windows open, it looked like a prison. Grey, soot-covered granite blocks, a roof stained with a century's worth of shit, green globes flanking the entrance steps announcing in faded white numerals that here the Eight-Seven, take it or leave it. Carella had taking it for a good many years now.

The priest's papers were waiting on his desk.

Not eighteen hours after the discovery of Father s body, his various papers those strewn office floor, those still in his file cabinets o desk had already been examined by the lab sent back uptown again by messenger. This was fast work. But the Commissioner himself happened be black and who attended a Baptist church in the Diamondback sectio city where he'd been born and raised . had morning made a television appearance on The Show, announcing by network to the nation at that city could not, and would not tolerate wanton murder of a gentle man God of persuasion. Not too many day-watch cops caught show because they were already out on the asking discreet questions in an attempt to a abet the investigating cops of the Eight-Seven w simultaneously mollifying the irate Commissi himself. Up in the Eight-Seven, life went on as priest or not, this was just another murder, no pun intended, part of the city with weeds.

It was lunchtime in the squadroom The detectives sat around in shirt sleeves pistols. Sandwiches and coffee, pizza and were spread on the desks before them. Only waved to Carella as he came in. The others w busy listening to Parker.

"There is not going to be no mystery in Dallas murders, I promise yo Parker said.

"There's never any mystery," Brown said.

"That I know. But what I'm saying, this is to be even less of a myst than there usually Especially since it's Texas."

"Love or money," Meyer said. "Those are only two reasons for murder.

"That's why there are no mysteries, is what I'm saying," Brown said.

"Tell me all about it," Parker said. "But what I'm saying is the onl mystery here is who the guy is.

What he is, is a crazy." "That's the third reason," Kling said. "Lunacy."

"There's nothing mysterious about any lunatic in the world," Parker said. "This thing in Dallas is gonna turn out to be just what the newspapers and the TV are saying it is, I'll bet you a hundred bucks

It's a crazy running around killing blondes. That's all it is. When catch this guy, he'll be nuttier than a Hershey bar, you wait and se

Carella wasn't particularly eager to tackle the priest's papers. Haw had gone downtown directly after they'd left the Lund apartment, hea for Ballistics where he was trying to pry loose a report a gun used an armed robbery. This meant that

now had to wade through all this stuff by F. The papers were in seve large manila lopes marked EVIDENCE. The papers

s, however, were not evidence per se, in the prints lifted from them already been :1 and filed downtown. Without the prints, the were mer papers, which might or might contain information.

But the Police Department had a lot of manila of various sizes, all them printed with word EVIDENCE, and a cop was likely as not to one these envelopes whenever he wanted to send or take something somepla even if something was a ham sandwich he planned to for lunch. So who had examined these the lab had later stuffed them into seven EVIDENC envelopes, and then had stamped, : envelopes RUSH, and further stampe them MESSENGER because a priest had been this city with an Irish-

Catholic police and then had wrapped the little red strings little red buttons, and here they were on desk alongside another EVIDENCE envelope did in fact contain a ham sandwich he planned for lunch.

He hated paperwork.

This was a whole hell of a lot of paperwork desk.

The clock on the wall read ten minutes to "What this is," Brown said "is a guy mother was a blonde, she used to lock him closet every day 'cause he wet the bed. So now got a thing about blondes. He thinks a blondes his mother. So he's got to kill every blonde in world before of them locks him in the again."

"Like I said," Parker said.

"My mother is blonde," Kling said.

"Did she lock you in the closet every day?"

"She chained me in the basement."

"Because you wet the bed?"

"I still wet the bed." "He thinks he's kidding," Parker said.

"What this thing in Texas is," Kling said, "is a guy who has a blond wife he hates. So first he kills the two blondes he already did, the the next one'll be his wife, and he'll kill two more blondes after t and everybody'll think it's a crazy blonde-hater doing the murders. When instead it's just this little guy, he's an accountant or something, wife is a big fat blonde he's been married to for forty years, he ca stand her, he has to get rid of her."

"No, I don't think this is no smoke screen," Parker said.

Carella figured he'd sooner or later have to dig into this mound of stuff here on his desk. It was just that it looked so formidable. Al those envelopes full of papers. Stalling, he picked up the phone and dialed the lieutenant's extension.

"How do you feel?" Byrnes asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Your headache."

"All gone."

"The P.C. was on television this morning," said.

"Yes, I know."

"A speech for every occasion, right? So what do think? Any leads yet

"Not yet. I just got the priest's papers, there's a lot stuff to loc

here."

"What kind of papers?"

"Correspondence, sermons, bills, like that."

"Any diary?"

"Not according to the lab inventory." "Too bad," Byrnes said, and then hesitated said, "Steve..." and hesitated again and finally "I'd like to be able to tell the Commission something soon."

"I understand."

"So let me know the minute anything good."

"I will."

"It was probably some kind of bug," Byrnes "the headache."

And hung up.

Carella put his own phone back on the cradle, looked at all those unopened evidence again. The pile hadn't diminished one damn bit.

decided to go to the Clerical Office for a coffee. When he got back his own desk, they still talking about the murders in Dallas.

"You want to know what I think it is?" said.

"What is it, Genero?"

"It's the full moon, is what it is." "Yes, Genero, thank you," Parke said. "Go the hall and take a pee, okay?"

"It's a known fact that when there's a moon. "

..

"What has the full moon got to do with "Nothing. But..."

"Then what the fucka you talkin' about?"

"I'm saying in the same week there's two dead blondes is what I'm saying. And there happens to be a full moon this week."

"There is no such thing as a full moon that lasts a whole week," Parke said. "And also, what makes you think a full moon here in this city means there's also a full moon in Dallas, Texas, where this fuckin' lunatic is killin' these blondes?"

"It's a known fact," Genero said, "that there was a full moon on Mon when the first blonde turned up. And the moon was still pretty full night when the second blonde turned up."

"Go take your pee, willya?"

Carella looked at all the evidence bags and which one he should open first. He looked up at the clock. Almost a quarter past one. He could not think of a single other thing that might keep him starting the paperwork. So he opened the bag the ham sandwich in it.

Alternately chewing on his sandwich and sipping his coffee, he began browsing no sense

into icy-cold water all at once ... through the papers in the first envelope. From the list on the outside of the envelope by someone at lab whose initials were - and through his own corroboration of the the first envelope contained only bills, canceled and check stubs. The checks were printed the heading St. Catherine's Roman Catholic Corporation, and beneath that Michael Birney, PSCCA. All of the bill were for Father Birney had incurred as parish priest.

were bills and consequent checks for electricity. ... and fuel oil... ... and snow plowing... ... and food... ... and postage... ... and salaries... Martha Hennessy, for example, got a check week for \$224. after deductions of \$21.02 FICA and \$34.00 for Federal Withholding Kristin Lund got a check every other week \$241.37 after deductions of \$21.63 for FICA \$25.00 for Federal Withholding Tax... "You want to know what this is?" Meyer "This is a guy who went out with this blonde, " Marie, whatever her name was... "Matilda," Parker said. "The first of

"Matilda, and it was a first date, and he scored but she turned him down. So he got so off, he killed her. Then last night..."

"Where'd you get Mary or Marie?" Brown "When the woman's name was Matilda?"

"What difference does it make what her name was? She's dead. The point is

"I'm just curious how you got Mary Matilda?"

"I made it up, okay?"

"You musta."

... and telephone bills, and bills service and a local garage, and bills for the church's missalettes, and mortgage bills, and bills for maintenance of the church grounds, and medical insurance bills, and

newspaper delivery bills, and bills for flowers for the altar, and dozens of other bills, all of which Father Michael paid like clockwork on the first and the fifteenth of every month. There were very few bills for personal clothing, and these for relatively small amounts. The last such item was for a new down parka at two hundred and twenty-seven dollars; it had been a winter.

"What I'm saying," Meyer said, "is that last night, this guy is still pissed off just thinking about it. So he goes out and finds himself another blond to kill."

"How long's he gonna stay pissed off, this guy?"

"I'll bet you the one last night was the end of it."

"Until there's another full moon," Genero said.

"Will you fuck off with your full moon?" Parker

"One thing I'm glad of," Brown said.

"Tomorrow's your day off," Parker said.

"That, too. But I'm also glad this lunatic ain't it here." "Amen," Parker said.

The priest sent quarterly checks to the church. The last one had been written the day of March for something he listed as "zum" on the stub; Carella had no idea what this might be. Six checks had been written: the day of Father Michael's death:

A check to Bruce Macauley Tree Care, Inc.

"Spraying done on 5/19" in the amount of A check to US Sprint for "Service thru 5/17 the amount of \$176.80.

A check to Isola Bank and Trust for "mortgage" in the amount of \$1480.75.

A check to Alfred Hart Insurance "Honda Accord LX, Policy number HR 9872724" amount of \$580.

A check to Orkin Exterminating Co. Inc. "May services" in the amount of \$36.50.

And a check to The Wanderers for deposit" in the amount of \$100.00. was it.

Each month, the balance in the St. Roman Catholic Church Corporation

leveled off at about a thousand dollars. There to be nothing irregular about Father accounts.

The next evidence envelope cont correspondence.

The first letter Carella took out of the was written on blue station addre woman's hand to Father Michael Birney Catherine's Church Recto He looked at the address. Mrs. Irene Brogan. The postmark envelope w from San Diego, California, and

May 19. He opened the envelope and took the letter from it:

My dearest brother, I am now in receipt ofyours ofmay 12th, and I ca tell you with what a saddened heart hasten to...

"I'm back," Hawes said from the gate in the slatted rail divider. "D you solve it yet?" "What's this case you're working, anyway?" said, turning to Carella.

Carella told him they had a D.O.A. stab-and-slash, weapon unknown, housekeeper secretary last ones to see him alive, wild prints over t church and the rectory, random latents from the papers here, but the were most likely secretary's. He also told Parker that the thought t Devil had dusted the priest and addition to the Devil the priest had also pissed some local youngsters as well as his o, congregation.

Parker thought this was very comical. He laughing. So did Genero.

"This is his correspondence here," Carella Hawes. "Just dig in." "Yo gonna have a lot of fun there," said, "reading a priest's mail," and burst laughing again. Genero started laughing again, ;oth men sat th giggling like teenagers. Hawes ;d it was spring fever.

At his own desk, Carella went back to the letter Father Michael's sister:

My dearest brother, I am now in receipt ofyours ofmay 12th, and I ca tell you with what a saddened heart I hasten to respond. Michael, ho have you managed to construct such a tower of doubt for yourself?. A don't you feel you should relate your fears to the bishop of your diocese? l just don't know how to counsel or advise you.

I wish I could be closer to you during this difficult time. What mak matters worse is that Roger and I are leaving for Japan this Saturda and we won't be back till the tenth of June. I'll try to call you be we leave, so we can have a good long telephone visit. Perhaps, by th the skies above will look a bit clearer.

Meanwhile, let me say only this: I know that you are a devout and lo servant of God and that however troubled you may now be, you will fi

through prayer the way to enlightenment and salvation.

Your loving sister, Irene turned over the envelope again.

pulled the phone to him, lifted the receiver, asked the operator for San Diego area dialed 1-619-555-1212 for information, and listing for a Roger Brogan at the address on the of the envelope. He dialed the number and let phone ring twenty times before hanging up.

"Here's something," Hawes said.

She did not think they were policemen. If they were policemen, they'd have identified themselves once to the street-corner cops she'd Flash the tin, reveal themselves as part of the fraternal order of law enforcement officers. So they weren't cops.

They were Spanish-speaking. This friend they had known the name Mary Ann and had known the nickname Mariucha. This frightened even more. They could have got the Mary Ann Houston, but not the Mariucha. This had come from either La Fortaleza or Buenos Aires either they'd been asking questions at the house else they'd been snooping around B.A. Either they were here. Moreover, they had tracked the school. Which meant they probably knew she lived as well.

She knew she should tell Willis, but she was afraid of losing him. Afraid too, that these men represented might somehow rub him, cause problems for him on the job. She loved him too dearly for that. So no, she couldn't have brought this trouble upon herself, whatever it was to be and she had to handle it herself.

Which was why she had to get a gun; the straight-blade knife seemed suddenly inadequate for defense, especially against the big, ugly one. But where? And where?

The gun laws were tough in this state. You needed a permit before you could walk into a shop and pick off the shelf. And you needed a damn good reason for wanting that permit. So how far would she have to travel to buy a gun? Even in the immediately adjoining states, didn't shop owners have to file applications well before letting you walk out with a gun? So where did the gun laws get easy? far across the river and into the trees? How far east, south or west? Where in these good United States could a person legally buy to kill her husband or her mother or, better yet Spanish-speaking goons who'd called her by her

name, her Buenos Aires street name?

Where?

She was living with a cop and personally knew at three dozen cops in this city, had gone out to with them, been in their homes, but there

a single one of them she could ask about ,tting a- well, maybe.., ye that was a . Eileen Burke. Call her up, ask her out to Eileen was a casually swing the an around to how and where a person acquire a hot in this. no, she was too

smart, she'd tip in a minute, know immediately it was Marilyn hersel who was looking for the Besides, she wasn't sure Eileen even liked Wasn't sure, for that matter, that any of friends liked her. A hooke former hooker.

Hookers knew people who knew where to' guns. In Houston, she'd have known where to gun.

In Buenos Aires, she'd have known where a gun.

But this was here and this was now, and been out of the life too lon

Or had she?

"If you're looking for a motive, this could motive," Hawes said, and handed a sheet of across the desk. It was the sort of newsletter yea ago would have been typed first and mimeographed. Today, it had star as a printout and had later been photocopied, copier streaks across page being the only duplication. Carella wondered how many of had be distributed. He also wondered how had got along before Xeroxing was Xeroxing? That was already the Stone Age.

Clerical Office's new fax machine was the miracle.

My Fellow Parishioners:

For the past several weeks now, Michael Birney, the pastor assigned guide the flock of St. Catherine's Church, has on more than one occa seen fit to use the pulpit as a scolding board for our... "What's a 'scolding board'?" Carella asked.

"Just keep reading," Hawes said, "it's self-explanatory."

... scolding board for our congregation. On these occasions, he has taken it upon himself to rail, nag, upbraid, revile, and berate...

"See what I mean?" Hawes said.

"Mmm," Carella said.

... the good and decent people of this parish for failing to meet their financial obligations by way of the weekly tithe to the Lord Our God has pointed out that there are no less than forty-eight references to the tithe in scriptures. He has seen fit to quote many of these Old Testament passages, the most recent of which he included in last Sunday's sermon at a time of the year better suited to more spiritual matters. I quote it again now:

"From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statute and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return you, says the Lord of hosts.

But you say, "How shall we return?"

Will man rob God? Yet you are to me.

But you say, "How are we robbing in your tithes and offerings! You cursed with a curse, for you are robbing. Bring the full tithes into storehouse that there may be food in my house!"

This from a spiritual leader, who has nothing but kindness and generosity from good people of this parish. My fellow parishioners, I would like to offer my own from the Holy Bible. This is from the According to John, Chapter 2, verses 14 to "In the temple he found those who selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. Making a whip of cords, he drove with the sheep and oxen, and he poured out the coins of money-changers and overturned tables. And he told those who sold pigeons, "Take these things away; not make my Father's house a trade!"

Father Michael Birney is making our Father's House a house of trade!

We are all well aware of our obligation to the Lord, we know full well that five percent of our annual income is expected by way of a weekly offering to the church. But we refuse to be turned into a congregation of bookkeepers. Let Father Michael count the offerings again and yet another time, and then let him count his blessings as well. A noble of God might then do well to apologize from the pulpit for accusing parishioners of robbing from... "Catch the last line," Hawes said.

... robbing from the Lord! Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Yours in Christ, Arthur L. Farnes "Well..." Carella said, and handed letter back.

"I know. You dismiss a loony right off because think nobody mails such letter to the whole nation and then actually goes out to kill, . But

suppose..."

"Uh-huh."

suppose this guy really was mad enough to go juke this priest? I mean he sounds pretty angry, doesn't he? I'm not a Catholic, so I don't.. "Me neither," Carella said. He considered a lapsed Catholic; his mother said, "Shame on you." "Okay, so I don't know how far you can go yelling at a priest assigned to your church, if in fact he is assigned, that's something I don't know."

"Me neither."

"But let's say he's assigned and let's say you're unhappy with the way he's bugging you paying your dues..."

"Your tithe." .

"Same thing, so you write a letter.., for purpose? To get him recalled? Do they do that in the Catholic Church? Recall a priest who isn't along with his congregation?"

"I really don't know."

"Neither do I."

"Or do you write to warn him that if he doesn't quit it out you're going to overturn his tables? I really, Steve, a lot of the stuff in this letter like a warning."

"Where does it sound like a warning?"

"You don't think this whole money-changer-in-the-temple stuff sounds like a warning?"

"No."

"You don't?"

"I really don't. Where else do you see a warning?"

"Where else? Okay, where else? How about here, example? Dit-dah, dit-dah, dit-dah, di... here. "Let him count his blessings.' Doesn't that sound like a warning?"

"No."

"Let the man count his blessings? That doesn't sound like a warning to you"

"No, it doesn't."

"Let him count his blessings before it's too late!"

"Where does it say that?"

"Say what?"

"'Before it's too late.' "

"It doesn't. I'm extrapolating."

"What does that mean, extrapolating?"

"It means to infer from what you already know."

"How do you know that?"

"I just happen to know it."

"I still don't think if you ask a man to count his it's necessarily warning."

"You don't."

"No, I don't."

"Okay, how about here?" "A noble man of God ght then do well to apolog from the pulpit for his parishioners of robbing from the Lord!" else right?"

"Where does it say. "Or else'?"

here. "Pride goeth before destruction, and spirit before a fall.' " 3esn't say. "Or else.' "

the code for. "Or else.' 1.
çck vcu clcn't want to go talk to this guy,
we won't go talk to forget it. I just thought..."

"He sounds like a very religious man, that's Carella said. "There ar people like that in world."

Like my father, Hawes thought, but didn't Who named me Cotton. After Puritan Priest.

"You want to know something?" he said. "In world, there are a lot of very religious people are out of their minds, did you know that? And them have been known to stick knives in people. Now I'm not saying t Arthur L. F which is the name of a lunatic to begin with ... dude wh

done the priest, but I am saying you letter like this one, it could death threat is I'm saying, and we'd be very dumb cops if we go knock on this guy's door right this what we should do."

"I agree with you," Carella said.

Schuyler Lutherson wanted to know who disciples had sprayed the inverse Catherine's churchyard gate.

Because, see," he said, "I don't want coming here."

Schuyler Lutherson was not his real name, real name was Samuel Leeds nice enough except that the Samuel sounded like a prophet Old Testament (which was the last thing on to sound like) and the Leeds sounded like manufacturing town in the north of England. his great-great-great-grandfather had been ironmonger in Leeds before coming to America, that was ancient history and Schuyler chose to his heritage more fancifully.

He had picked the given name Schuyler not so it meant a "scholar" or "wise man" in (actually, he was quite unfamiliar with the language) because it sounded like "sky," in the skies above, or the heavens above or the realm of God above, from which an angel once fallen. For was it Satan himself who'd been expelled from Heaven, hurled the upper stratosphere to the fiery lower And was not Satan simultaneously known as whose name Samuel Leeds could not out of worshipful humility, but whose he could at least echo alliteratively... Lucifer, .. and then rhyme slantingly... Lucifer, ... the surname achieving grandeur in Lutherson, the son of Luther, the son of leader of the Church of the Bornless One, all Satan!

NOT bad for a kid of nineteen, which was how old he had been when he originated his church in Angeles. He was now thirty-nine years old, that been twenty years ago, away back in the days of flower children, remember, Maude? When was preaching love? Except Schuyler Lutherson the pulpit of the Church of the Bornless One, where between the spread legs a voluntary "altar" each week, he preached opposite of love, he preached hate, scorching after pussy with the white-hot scorn of his Everything in the worship of Satan was a opposites, an exercise in reversal or obverse Through hate, love. Through denial, Through darkness, light. Through evil, good.

Even Schuyler's carefully cultivated supported the tenets of his creation Not for sham look of a bearded devil with arched eyebrows nor for him the silken crimson robes and hood. Was he a true and sacred priest of a dedicated to the Infernal One, or merely a caricature? Would the Devil on earth appear more as the Devil, or would he in his infinite evil go

assume the shape of some lesser form? likewise, and even so, would t
son of Lucifer's Son, Lutherson.t L lift the cuff earthly trouser to
expose a furry ankle and a hoof?. Would he advertise his yellow eyes
beacons to unbelievers? Would he blow the breath of brimstone and pi
from his regurgitate purple vomit into the faces of would this be th
proper behavior and Lord Satan's son and servant?

Schuyler Lutherson was blond.

He had blue eyes.

he'd served in a juvenile
detention facility in fornia, back before he'd changed his name, and
still worked out at a gym near the church three .times a week. As a
result, he had the slim, lithe, sinewy body of a long-
distance runner.

His nose would have been Grecian perfection, had it not once been br
at that selfsame .etention facility, where the fair-haired, , -
cheeked

as-yet-unborn Schuyler Lutherson forced to protect his ass from an
older, huskier determined to have a taste of it at all costs. The co
he'd had in mind did not include the spleen he'd suffered after he'd
broken the Schuyler's nose and declared his intention of him his
"private and personal pussy." The used a two-by-four by of
discouragement, picking it up from a pile of in the carpentry shop a
wielding it like a bat. The older boy never bothered him Neither did
anyone else.

Schuyler had a wide androgynous mouth, with the lower lip of a pouti
screen siren, and the rather

upper lip of a politician. He had even white the better to eat you w
my dear. That they capped was a matter of small import or note.

he smiled, the gates to the infernal chambers

wide and eternal midnight beckoned.

was. smiling now, wanting to know who --
- had painted the pentagram on
the church

He spoke deliberately and precisely.

"Who, exactly, painted the pentagram on fucking gate?" he asked.

Through obscenity, purity.

The three looked at him.

Two women and a man. Each of the women served as altars many times. Through Schuyler knew them intimately. The man knew intimately as we through the public rites of fornication that followed each ritual. One of the women was named Laramie. The other was named Coral. These were not the real ones. The man was named Stanley. This was his name; who on earth would want to change his to Stanley unless he planned on becoming a Stanley? Stanley was a salary-drawing church Laramie and Coral were disciples, and did not draw salaries per se, but money somehow stuck to fingers. Laramie was black and Coral was white; Stanley was Hispanic; this was a regular Nations church here. Together they pondered who have been foolish enough to decorate the church with a pentagram.

"Because now, see," Schuyler said, "the dead."

Stanley shook his head, not in sorrow, dismay: the priest was now in the dead, someone had painted a pentagram on St. gate. Stanley's head was massive and covered in tawny tangled hair that was his.

He was a lion; when he shook his head, it was monumental.

"We have nothing to hide here, that's true," he said.

Both women nodded, a symphony in black and white. Coral was wearing a paisley skirt and a white peasant blouse, no bra. She had long blonde hair, eyes as blue as Schuyler's, a button nose dusted with freckles. Laramie was a skin-tight jeans, boots, and a sweater. She was tall and strikingly good-looking, a Masai miraculously transported to the big bad city. In comparison, Coral looked like a prairie wife - which incidentally she'd been before east to join Schuyler's church. They were both thinking hard. Who could have been dumb to paint a pentagram on the churchyard gate? was the burning question of the day.

"see," Schuyler said, "suppose the police raising some of the same questions that asshole raised? Suppose they come here and want to know that, see, as for example, are we X during the mass, which is a controlled environment? see? We can always tell the Man we are doing Ecstasy anything else at our services, by the way are private services, see, not to the public except by invitation, is what we tell the Man. But then we'll have police shit, we'll have them coming around with sarsaparilla breaking our balls merely on principle, what cops know how to do very well. Because they are going to figure, see, in their limited way; that somebody painted a pentagram on the gate, then maybe that same person did the And they're going to be all over us like locusts.

"Excuse me, Sky," Coral said.

"Yes, Coral."

Gently. His eyes caressing her. He would to serve as altar again this Saturday night, twenty-sixth, a night of no particular significance in the church calendar except that it followed immediately after the high holy solemn Feast of the Expulsion. The two most "religious" holidays, of course were All Hallows' Eve. But these were nights abandoned, and the Feast of the Expulsion is traditionally more sedate. This was why the Saturday following was generally a time of greater release and realization. Coral made a perfect altar. Lying on the draped couch with her legs spread, her hands candelabra, she was a woman in constant twitching in expectation. Even standing him now, she shifted from foot to foot, her fingers twisting her skirt like a little girl, twisting it.

"I feel we should open this to the congregation, Sky, put it to them through someone amidst - perhaps through perhaps through just sheer stupidity - has the church in a precarious position, Sky. And we should ask whoever was that painted the star on the gate to come forward and admit it, then perhaps go to the police voluntarily, himself or herself, and say it was they done. So investigation would end right there, with we've actually put that symbol on the gate. Is what think, Sky."

Flat midwestern voice, little gap between her two front teeth. Twisting her skirt like a little girl on to recite. Like to do a mass over her right fucking minute, he thought.

"I think Coral's right," Stanley said, nodding his assive leonine head. "Throw it open to the "

and I throw it open wide to the congregation, Schuyler

"... this Saturday night, before the mass actually before you do the Introit. Explain to them in jeopardy here because of some dumb thing in all innocence..."

s," Laramie said.

Woman of few words.

Said her piece, did her little Masai dance, and got off the stage.

"Unless whoever painted the star also killed the "

looked at her.

you think that's really a possibility?" he "After what the priest said

She shrugged.

The shrug made it abundantly clear the priest had said could, in the proper mind, taken seed as a motive for murder.

"A total asshole," Schuyler said. "If he'd mouth shut..."

"But he didn't."

This from Laramie again, who made an keeping her mouth shut most of time.

"No, that's true," Schuyler said, "he which is why we now find ourse in a that is potentially, see, dangerous. I can tell don't want policemen coming here. I don't them looking into this or that, discovering that girls perform certain parts of the ritual, that on occasion we've used harmless controlled substances in support of the discovering that on occasion we've even small animals during the mas though I imagine that's against the fucking law, is it? point is, se the priest made enough of a fuss the pulpit, brought enough attentio us, m what was it, Stanley? - a neighborhood the side of Christ, can you believe it? course, illustrates what a threat our church is, illustrates clearly, see, how desperatel Christ-lovers would love to drive us non-existence, murder the infant church in its see. But..."

"Sky."

From Coral. Softly.

"I think we ought to contact the police our selves," she said, "befo the mass tomorrow - right away, in fact., to tell them we're of what's painted on that gate and to let them we're doing our own internal examination..."

The words she used.

'... in an effort to determine who put the star on so he or she hers can come forward and veal who they are, Sky. This way we're letting police know we're doing thing in our power to cooperate. So they won some kind of cabal connected with our church the sacred sign on the priest's gate and then him." "Unless," Laramie said.

They all turned to look at her.

"Unless that's exactly what did happen," she said.

Llewellyn Farnes was a tall, rangy white man the speech of a born and bred city-dweller, and look of a weather-hardened New Englander. His men's clothing store was on The Street between Carson and Coles, and he had just come from lunch when the detectives walked in at o'clock that afternoon. He guessed he was the only man outside of Homicide Division who still wore a vest. He was willing to bet he also wore a fedora.

The detectives identified themselves and told him they were investigating the murder of Michael Birney. Farnes went into a long apparently heartfelt eulogy on the priest he recently challenged in his open letter, now him a dedicated man of God, a true servant Lord, a kind gentle shepherd to the flock, and a wonderful human being whose loss was sorely felt.

All this with a straight face.

"Mr. Farnes," Hawes said, "we were looking through Father Michael's correspondence, came across this letter you sent to congregation..."

"Yes," Farnes said, and smiled, and nodded.

"You know the letter I mean, right?"

"Yes. The one I wrote in response to his about the tithe." "Yes," Hawes said.

"Yes," Farnes said.

He was still smiling. But now he was serious, his head bowed. Yes, I sent that letter. response to him chastening us about our obligations. Yes, I'm the one who resented. Yes. Me. Nodding, nodding.

"What about that letter, Mr. Farnes?"

"What about it?" Farnes said.

"Well, I'd say it was a pretty angry letter, you?"

"Only pretty angry? I'd say it was monstrous, really."

The detectives looked at him.

"In fact, Mr. Farnes," Hawes said, "you wrote things in that letter..."

"Yes, I was furious."

"Uh-huh."

"Demanding money that way! As if we weren't giving our fair share! A the man had to do

trust us! But, no! Runs his mouth off at the pulpit instead, week after week of -and-brimstone sermons better suited to Salem than to this parish! Never once trusting us!

me," he said, and walked immediately to a man who was taking a pair of trousers from the rack. "May I help you, sir?" he asked.

"Just looking," the man said. "Are these all the - two longes you have?"

from here to the end of the rack." -. "Thank you," the man said.

"Let me know if I can be of any assistance," said, and walked back to the detectives.

g his voice, he said, "That man is a He walked out of here at Christmastime an entire suit under the suit he was already I realize after he was gone. Forgive me him, but I'd like to catch the son of "So would we," Carella said.

"You were saying something about trust," said, "Yes," Farnes said, his eyes following the he moved along the rack. "In many churches is a business -

- and I mean no bl This is why a tithe is specified in the Bible, so won't be any misunderstanding about the the church is forced to conduct. In order to do you understand? Ten percent, spelled out and white. Five in the basket every week, the five as gifts to worthwhile charities. Do you mean so far?"

"Yes, we follow you," Carella said.

"Okay. How do you know whether you're five percent in the basket? Instead of two three and a half percent? The answer is you You trust congregation. By trusting them, inspire their trust in turn, and you find that of getting a short count every week, generating even more revenue for the church fool should..."

"Excuse me, but is this the dressing "Yes," Farnes said, "through the curtains Let me roll those trouser cuffs back for you, "That's all right, I can..."

"No problem at all, sir," Farnes said, and three pairs of trousers were draped man's arm, and rolled back the cuffs, "There you are, sir "Thank you," the man said.

"Let me know if you need any help," Farnes said, came back to the detectives. Lowering his voice he said, "He's going in there with the

pairs Let's see how many he walks out with."

"You were talking about trust," Hawes said.

"Yes," Farnes said. "I was saying that any fool know you can't get anywhere in business - if it's the business of saving souls for Jesus [st- by not trusting the people you're doing 'ss with. That's what tried to explain to Father , may God rest his soul, in my letter."

"It didn't sound as if your letter was about mast," said.

"It didn't? I thought it did." "Well, for example, Mr. Farnes," Hawes said, already gone over this with Carella and now himself an expert, "you don't think these do you, are about trust, here, this passage h said, unfolding the letter and finding what

was looking for, "here, Mr. Farnes, 'and he out the coins of the money-changers and 1 their tables.' Is that about trust, Mr. "It's about not turning a place of worship into a of commerce."

how about this," Hawes said, gathering "right here, Mr. Farnes, "Let Father Birney the offerings again and yet another time, and then let count his blessings as well." you mean by 'let him count his blessing as "Let him realize that he is blessed with a generous congregation.

"And this? What does this mean?" "Pride before destruction, and a haughty spirit before Is that about trust?"

"It's about trusting the Lord to show the leads away from pride and haughtiness."

"Well, you certainly have an odd way interpreting your own words," Hawes said. discuss any of this personally with Father "Yes. In fact, we had a good laugh over "A good what?"

"A good laugh. Me and Father Michael."

"Had a laugh over this letter you wrote?"

"Oh, yes. Because I was so incensed, you "And he found that funny, didn't he? That incensed enough..."

"Yes."

"... by the sermons he'd given..."

"Yes." ... "... to have written a letter you described as 'monumentally angry.' He that..."

"Yes, we both did."

"... hilarious."

"Well..."

"Side-splittingly funny."

"No, but we did find it humorous. That That I'd written this righteous indignant to the congregation when all I had to do, really, go see Father Michael personally -- as I finally do - and have a pleasant chat with him, and the whole thing out."

"So you straightened the whole thing out."

"Yes."

"When?"

"On Easter Sunday. I stopped by in the afternoon , went back to the rectory with him. We a good long talk."

"How'd you finally settle it?"

"Father Michael said he would ask each member the congregation to confide in him the amount he she could comfortably afford to contribute each and then he would trust them to contribute amount faithfully. I was all a matter of trust, see. That's what I was able to explain to we talked. That he should just have a little He glanced toward the curtains. The man gone back with the three pairs of pants was coming through into the store again. There were only two pairs of pants slung over his arm.

a minute, sir!" Farnes called.

"Ah, there you are," the man said. "I'll take the I'm wearing. Can I them measured,

.. why, yes, sir, certainly, sir," Farnes said, step right this way, tailor's at the other of the store."

"I left my own pants in the dressing room," man said. "Will they be there?" "Just have a little trust, sir," Hawes said.

Carella placed the call to the archdiocese four-fifteen that afternoon.

The man who the phone identified himself as Archbishop Quentin's secretary and told him that His Eminence was out at the moment but perh

he could be assistance. Carella told him this had to do with murder was investigating... "Oh, dear."

"Yes, the murder of the priest up here..."

"Ah, yes."

"Father Michael Birney."

"Yes."

"And I'm calling because I'm trying to locate sister, but there's no answer at the number I..."

"His Eminence has already taken care of the secretary said."

"Taken care of what?"

"Notifying Father Michael's sister."

"In Japan? How'd he...?"

"Her husband's office number was in our here. His Eminence was able get the name hotel from Mr. Brogan's secretary, and he Mrs. Brogan there. She'll be here Sunday in time the funeral." "Well, good," Car said. "Would you to know if there are any other relatives? I'd like

"I believe there was only the sister."

"And you say she'll be here Sunday?"

"She's already on the way, sir."

"Well, thank you very much."

"Not at all." Carella put the phone back on the hook.

Already on her way, he thought.

Which meant that whatever had been troubling the good priest would h to wait till Sunday, after all.

The man sitting opposite Marilyn was a white man in his early riddle His name was Shad Russell, and he knew why she was here, but he was making his pitch anyway because he figured it never hurt to take a chance. Shad used to be a gambler in Las Vegas before he came East a got himself settled in various other little enterprises. He had a pockmarked face from when he was a little kid, and he had a mustache that looked as if it could use some fertilizer, and he was as thin a as tall as Abraham Lincoln and he thought he had a devastating smile

Actually, he looked like a crocodile when he smiled.

He was smiling now.

"So old Joe give you my number, huh?" he said.

"Yes," Marilyn said.

"Old Joe Seward," he said, and shook his head.

They were in his room on the second floor old Raleigh Hotel on St. Sebastian Avenue, where the Warringer Theater used to be. Madl come here to Diamondback by taxi. She wearing jeans and a leather jacket a tan sw Her hair was pinned up under a woolen cap. It. one thing fo white woman to go alone exclusively black neighborhood to talk to so Texas pimp had recommended. It was another flashing long blonde hair

"How is he?" Shad asked.

"I haven't seen him in years," she said.

"How come you know him?" "He said you could help me find a gun."

"But that don't answer my question, does.

Shad said, and smiled his crocodile smile. had the sudden feeling th this was going harder than she'd thought.

"If you think I'm a cop or something..." she "No, I..." :

"... you can call Joe on my credit card, him to..."

"I already did."

The crocodile smile.

"Though not on your credit card."

The smile widening.

"On my own nickel. Right after you hung ask him who this Mary Ann Ho was that a gun so bad."

"And what'd he tell you?" "He told me you used to work for him it mu eight, nine years ago. When you were still in He said you used to ha piano- man pimp there in Houston, but he got himself stabbed in i.bar, which was when Joe come into your life. He told me you got busted at ripe old age of and that he paid the five-

bill fine and let walk away
from his stable' cause you asked him and he happens to be a gent. So
I'm not you're fuzz."

"Then why are you asking me things you already w?"

"I wanted to see if you'd lie."

"I would've."

"I figured. Why you need this piece?"

"Some people are bothering me."

"You going to shoot these people?"

"If I have to."

"And then what?"

"Then what what?" i. "Who do you tell where you got the piece."

"Not even my priest," Marilyn said.

, I'll just bet you got a priest," Shad said, smiled the crocodile s
again. "You still in same line of work?"

"

bad. "Cause I could maybe find some major for somebody like you." s,
not looking for any major..." really major..."

"... or even minor ones. I need a gun. Can you me one? If not, adi6s

"Think about the other for a minute."

"Not even for a second."

"Think about it," he said, and smiled. "Is

any harm thinking about it?"

"Yes, there is."

"Who you gonna shoot with this gun?"

"That''s none of your business."

"If the gun comes back to me, then it becomes business."

"It won't come back to you, don't worry."

"Are these people pimps? Does this involve prostitution?" "No. I already told you, I'm not..."

"'Cause I don't want some angry pimp here yellin' one of his cunts to..." "Goodbye, Mr. Russell," Marilyn said, and up, and slung her shoulder bag, and started for door.

"What'd I do?" Shad asked. "Insult you? fuckin' bad. I got my own ass to protect here. I want no gun of mine involved in a family. You got a quarrel with your old man, go settle it him quiet, you don't need no gun of mine."

"Thanks, I understand your position. It was meeting you."

"Look at her. All insulted on her fuckin' horse. I hit it right on the head, didn't I? You this gun to dust your pimp."

"Yep, right on Goodbye,

the head.

Mr. Russell.

I'll be sure to tell Joe how helpful you were."

"Sit down, what's your fuckin' hurry? If this ain't a pimp, then what? Dope?"

"No."

"You say some people are bothering you, what are they bothering you? Did you forget to pay them for their cocaine?"

"Do you have a gun for me, or don't you? I don't need this bullshit, really don't."

"A gun will cost you," he said.

"How much?"

"It's a shame you ain't in the trade these days," he said, and smile the crocodile smile. "'Cause I have this very major Colombian merchandise who'll be here in the city this weekend, I'm sure we could work out kind'of barter arrange. "

And suddenly he saw what was in Marilyn's eyes.

"All right, all right, all right," he said, "forget it, all right?"

And just as suddenly turned all business.

"What kind of gun did you have in mind?" he asked.

The three who came into the squadroom on morning at the crack of dawn well, at minutes to eight, actually looked either like wandering ban twelfth-century minstrels or gypsy troupe out of Carmen, depending on perspective. The perspective from Cotton desk was sunwashed and some hazy, the light slanting in through open windows to create almost prism effect of golden air afloat dancing dust motes. Out of this refractive mass there appeared the tentative trio, causing Hawes blink as if he were witnessing either a mirage or religious miracle.

There were two women and a man.

The man was between and slightly forward of the women, the point of flying wedge, so to speak, for such it resembled as the three came through the gate in the slatted-rail divider and immediately homed in on the closest desk, which happened to be Hawes's.

perhaps his red hair had served as a beacon. Or perhaps he'd emanate sense of authority that naturally attracted anyone seeking assistance. Or perhaps they gravitated toward him because he was the only person in the squadroom at this ungodly hour of the morning.

The man was wearing bright blue polyester trousers and a rugby shirt, a white collar and alternating red-and-blue stripes of different widths.

He was a hairy giant of a man, with long tawny tresses and a solid, muscular build. One of the women flanking him was tall and black and other was blonde and not quite as tall, and both women were dressed if to complement the synthetic glitz of the hirsute giant.

The blonde was wearing a wide, flaring red skirt and a turtleneck shirt (no bra, Hawes noticed) that was the same color as the man's polyester trousers.

She was also wearing sandals, although it wasn't yet summertime. The black woman was wearing an equally wide, flaring skirt (hers was grey) and a turtleneck shirt (again, no bra, Hawes noticed) that was the color of the blonde's hair. She, too, was wearing sandals.

"There's a sign," Hawes said.

All three looked around.

Hawes pointed.

The hand-lettered sign just to the right of the gate in the railing read:

STATE YOUR BUSINESS BEFORE ENTERING SQUADROOM "Oh, sorry," the man said. "We didn't notice it.

Slight Hispanic accent.

"The desk sergeant said we should come up," blonde said. Little tiny voice. Almost a whisper. It compelled attention. Eyes as blue as the sky stretched beyond the squadroom windows. Voice flat as the plains of Kansas. Hawes visualized cornfields. "My name is Coral Anderson," she said.

Hawes nodded.

"I'm Stanley Garcia," the man said.

"Laramie Forbes," the black woman said.

"Is it all right to come in?" Coral asked.

"You're in already," Hawes said. "Please down."

Stanley took the chair alongside the desk.

the gent, Hawes thought. The women dragged over for themselves. Sitting they crossed their legs under voluminous skirts. The movement Hawes of days when hippies roamed the earth.

"How can I help you?" he said.

"I'm first deacon at the Church of the One," Stanley said.

The Church of the Bornless One. Devil-worshiper Kristin Lund had said. Hawes wondered if Coral Laramie were second and third. He also wondered what their real names were.

"We're disciples," Laramie said, indicating the blonde with a brief sideward nod.

She had a husky voice. Hawes wondered if she sang in the church choir. He wondered if there were choirs in churches that worshipped the Devil.

"We're here about the dead priest," Stanley said.

Hawes moved a pad into place.

"No, no," Stanley said at once. "Nothing like that."

"Nothing like what?" Hawes said. His pencil was poised above the pad like a guillotine about to drop.

"We had nothing to do with his murder," Stanley said.

"That's why we're here," Coral said.

Let's get some square handles first," Hawes said.

They looked at him blankly.

"Your real names," he said.

"Coral is my real name," the blonde said, offended.

Hawes figured she was lying; nobody's real name was Coral.

Nor Laramie, either, for that matter.

"How about you?" he asked the other woman.

"I was born there," she said.

"Where's there?" "Laramie, Texas," she said. Note of challenge in her husky voice. Dark eyes flashing.

"Does that make it your real name?" Hawes asked.

"How'd you like to be Henrietta all your life?"

Hawes thought Cotton was bad enough. legacy of a religious father who believed Cotton Mather was the greatest of the Puritans. He shrugged, wrote "Henrietta Forbes" on the studied it briefly, nodded in agreement and immediately asked the blonde, "How do you Anderson?"

"With an. "O," "she said.

"Where are you from originally, Coral?"

"Indiana."

"Lots of Corals out there, I'll bet."

She hesitated, seemed about to flare, and smiled instead, showing a little gap between her two upper front teeth. "Well, it was Cora Lucille, guess," she said, still smiling, looking very like a Cora Lucille in that moment. Hawes' pigtailed tied with polka-dot rags. He nodded,

"Cora Lucille Anderson" on the pad, and then "And you, Stanley?"
"Stanley," Stanley said. "But in Spanish."

"Which is?"

"Estaneslao." "Thanks," Hawes said. "Now what about priest?"

"We're here about the gate, actually," Coral uncrossing her legs and leaning forward e skirt tented, hands clasped, elbows resting on thi the Sixties again. Hawes was swept with sudden wave of nostalgia.

"What gate?" he said.

"The churchyard gate."

"What about it?"

"What's painted on the gate," Coral said.

"The pentagram."

"The star," Stanley said.

"Inverted," Laramie said.

"Uh-huh," Hawes said.

Let them run with it, he thought.

"We know what you must be thinking," Stanley said. His accent sounded more pronounced now.

Hawes wondered if he was getting nervous. He said nothing.

"Because of the star," Laramie said.

"And its association to Satanism," Coral said.

"Uh-huh," Hawes said.

"Which many people misunderstand, of course," Coral said, and smiled gap-toothed smile again.

"In what way?" Hawes asked. "Is the pentagram misunderstood?"

"Yes."

"In that it's upside down," Stanley said.

"Inverted," Laramie said.

"May I borrow your pencil?" Coral said.

"Sure," he said, and handed it to her.

"And f'll need a piece of paper."

He tore a page from the back of the pad and handed it to her.

"Thanks," she said.

He noticed that she was holding the pencil in her left hand. He wondered if left-handedness had anything to do with Devil worship. He wondered they were all left-handed.

"This is what a star looks like," she said, and began drawing. "The we see on the American flag, a sheriff's star, they all look like th

Hawes watched as the star look shape.

"There," she said.

"Uh-huh," he said.

"And this is what a star looks like when you it upside down," she sa

"When you invert it," Laramie said.

"Yes," Coral said, her head bent over the sheet paper, her left hand moving. "There," she said a and showed the page to Hawes again. Side the stars looked like a pair of acrobats cartwheels:

"Uh-huh," Hawes said.

"Do you see the difference?"

"Yes, of course."

"What's the difference?" Coral asked.

"The difference is that the one on the left..."

"Yes, the so-called pure pentagram..."

"Whatever, has only one point on top, whereas the other has two."

"Yes," Coral said. "And whereas the pure pentagram stands on two points, the symbol of Baphomet..."

"The inverted star..."

"... stands on only one point."

"Indicating the direction to Hell," Laramie said.

"I see," Hawes said. Though he didn't really.

"If you look at the pure pentagram..." Coral said.

"The one on the left," Stanley said.

"Yes," Hawes said.

"You can imagine, can't you," Coral said, "a man standing with his legs spread wide, those are the two lower points of the star, and his arms outstretched, those are the two middle points. His head would be at the uppermost point." "I see," Hawes said again, trying hard to visualize a man inside the upright star.

"In ancient times..." Coral said.

"Oh, centuries ago," Stanley said.

"The white magicians..."

"This has nothing to do with their color," Laramie said.

"No, only with the kind of magic they performed," Coral said. "White magic."

"Yes," Hawes said.

"As opposed to black magic," Stanley said.

"Yes."

"These white magicians," Coral said, "used the pentagram to symbolize the goodness of man..."

"... because it showed him standing upright," Laramie said.

"But in the church of the opposite..." Coral said.

"Where good is evil and evil is good..."

"In the church of the contrary..." Coral said.

"Where to lust is to aspire..."

"And to achieve is to satisfy all things carnal..."

"The pentagram has been turned upside down..."

Coral said.

"Inverted," Laramie said.

"So that the horns of the goat..."

"... the Satanic symbol of lust..."

"... fit exactly into the two upper points..."

"... which represent Good and Evil..."

. the universal duality in eternal conflict..." "And the three other points," Coral said, "represent in their inverted form a denial of the trinity..."

"... the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," Stanley said.

"... doomed to burn eternally in the flames of Hell..." Laramie said

"... as indicated by the single point jutting directly downward," Stanley said.

"An upside-down star," Coral said.

"Inverted," Laramie said, and all three fell silent.

"What about it?" Hawes asked.

"Detective L-Hawes." Coral said, "we are aware..."

He wondered how she knew his name.

"... that the star painted on St. Catherine's gate might link us in minds of the police..."

Sergeant Murchison had probably given it to her downstairs.

"... to the murder of the priest there."

"But," Laramie said.

"But," Coral said, "we want you to know that we plan to question our congregation tonight and find out whether somebody if anybody paint that star on the churchyard gate." "And if they did..." Stanley said

"... we'll make damn sure that person comes right over here to tell about it his own self. So you can question them and see we had nothing to do with it.

The murder. Even if someone, if anyone, is guilty of painting that gate." "Guilt is innocence," Laramie said.

"We'll let you know," Stanley said, and all three rose in many-splendored radiance and disappeared into the sunlight and through the gate at which they had originally materialized.

Hawes wondered how Carella was doing out there on the street.

On a bright spring morning, it was difficult to think of the street slum. There seemed no visible evidence of poverty here. The people walking by a leisurely pace were not dressed in tatters. There were flowerpots with blooms in them on fire escapes and windowsills. The window curtains flapping in the early morning breeze seemed clean and fresh did the laundry hanging on backyard clotheslines.

The sanitation trucks had been through early, and garbage cans were lined up empty along wrought-iron railings that flanked recently front stoops. As Carella came up the street, a truck was sprinkling the gutters, giving the asphalt a sheen of rain-washed freshness. This not be a slum.

But it was.

The endless crush of winter had departed, and in its place there was the false hope of spring. The people living in these tenements true, brick did seem brighter in sunshine than it did beneath a grey and leaden sky knew that hope was the thing with feathers, as elusive and rare as happiness. This stretch of 87th Precinct territory was almost exclusively black. And here, despite the illusion of spring, there was indeed grinding poverty, and illiteracy, and drug addiction and malnutrition and desperation. The black man in America knew where it was at. And where it was at was not here, not in these mean streets. Where it was at was uptown someplace, so far uptown that the black man had never been there, could not even visualize it there, knew only that uptown was a shining city somewhere high on a hill, a promised land

where everyone went to Choate and Yale and a thousand points of light glistened in every cereal bowl.

Read my lips, Carella thought.

Nathan Hooper lived in a tenement two blocks south of The Stem.

At eight-thirty that Saturday morning, Carelia found him asleep in a back bedroom he shared with his older brother and his thirteen-year-old sister.

Hooper was sixteen. The brother, dressed and out of the house already was eighteen. The sister was wearing a white cotton slip. Hooper was wearing white Jockey undershorts and a white tank top undershirt. He annoyed that his mother had let the police in while he was still asleep. He told his sister to cover up, couldn't she see there was SOMEBODY here? The sister shrugged into a robe and her mother was having her morning coffee. She had already told Carella that she had to be at work at nine; on Saturdays and Sundays, she cleaned offices downtown. Rest of the week, she cleaned white people's houses uptown.

Hooper pulled on a pair of jeans and went out into the narrow hallway barefooted, Carella following.

The bathroom was a six-by-eight rectangle containing a sink, an ancient yellowing claw-foot bathtub with a jerry-built shower over it, and incessantly gurgling toilet bowl. A plastic was drawn half-closed over the tub. The curtain rod was hung with bikini towel. Hooper stepped in, and closed the door behind him. Standing in the hallway, Carella could hear him urinating and then washing at the sink. When door opened again Hooper was drying his hands a peach-colored towel.

Wordlessly, scowling, he went back into bedroom again, Carella still following him. He opened the middle drawer of the only dresser in room, took out a black T-shirt, and pulled it on his head. He sat on the edge of the bed, pulled pair of white socks, and laced up a pair of high-topped sneakers. He was wearing his hair what was called a High Top Fade, currently the rage among young black men in this city. The resembled a fez sitting on top of the head, with lower part of the skull shaved almost clean, and it required very little maintenance other than an occasional bit of topiary. Hooper passed a pick comb through it, and walked out into the kitchen, still wordlessly, still scowling, Carella still patiently following. Hooper's sister was sitting at the table, mug of coffee between her hands. She was staring through the open

kitchen window at the clothes flapping on the backyard lines, watching them in fascination, as if they were brightly colored birds.

Hooper's mother was just about to leave. She was a woman in her fifties, Carella guessed. Actually, he was high by about ten years.

"Offer the man some coffee," she said, and went out.

"You want some coffee?" Hooper asked grudgingly.

"I could use some," Carella said.

"You always come see people in the middle of the night?" the sister asked.

"Sorry I got here so early," Carella said, and smiled.

The girl did not smile back. Hooper was rummaging in the cupboard over the drainboard, searching for clean cups. He made a great show of exasperation, finally banged two cups down on the counter top, miraculously unscathed, and poured them three-quarters full. A container of milk was on the table. He poured from it into his own cup, and then shoved it across to where Carella had taken the chair alongside the girl's.

"Sugar?" the girl said, and offered Carella the bowl.

"Thanks," Carella said. "What's your name?" "Why?" she said.

"Why not?" he said, and smiled.

"Seronia," she said.

"Nice to meet you."

"When you gonna lock up the shits beat up Nate?" she said.

"That's what I'd like to talk about," Carella said.

"Be the first one since it happened," Seronia said, and shrugged.

"That's not entirely true, is it?" Carella said. "The way I found out about it was from a report in our files. So someone had to..."

"Yeah, the blues," Hooper said. "But wasn't no detectives come around later is what she means."

"Well, here's a detective now," Carella said.

"You don't look like no detective I ever seen," Seronia said. "Mama you showed her a bad but, man, you don't look like no detective to m

"What do detectives look like?" he asked.

"Like pieces a shit," she said.

Carella wasn't looking for an argument here. Was he even certain the girl was trying to provoke one. He was here for information. A priest had been murdered. A priest who'd protected this boy on Easter Sunda

"According to the report..."

"The report's full of shit," Hooper said. "The only thing they wanted to do was get out of that church fast, before they got lynched. They were scareder than I was. You never seen two cops writing so fast."

"They didn't even drive him to the hospital," Seronia said. "He's bleeding like you shoulda seen him, man. Was the priest finally took him to the emergency room."

"Where was this?"

"Greer General."

"And you say Father Michael drove you there?"

"Walked me there, man," Hooper said. "You know like Christ walkin' with the fuckin' cross on his back and everybody jeerin' him, whatever? That was me, man. I'm bleedin' from the head from where one of them fucks me with a ball bat..."

"Start from the beginning," Carella said.

"What's the use?" Hooper said.

"What can you lose?" Seronia said, and shrugged again.

Easter this year had fallen on the fifteenth day of April, but even its death throes winter tenaciously refused to loosen its grip and the day was howlingly windy, with what appeared to be a promise of snow in the air. A sullen rolling sky hung in angry motion over the city, giving it the look of an El Greco painting even in neighborhoods not entirely Hispanic. In this checkerboard precinct where black squares became white squares in the blink of an eye, Nathan Hooper lived in an area that was ninety-percent black, eight-percent Hispanic, and two-percent

Asian. Not two blocks away was an entirely white neighborhood composed of Italian Irish, and a sprinkling of Jews. The melting pot of this precinct never really came to a boil. On windy Easter Sunday, it is about to

overboil.

Hooper rarely goes to church, but today he into a friend of his name Harold Jones, who other guys all call Fat Harold after the Bill Cos routine. Fat Harold isn't truly fat; he is, in fact, thin and spindly-looking. He is also a crack who is on his way to church this Easter Sunday pray that he can kick his habit and become a rich famo black television star like Bill Cosby. decides to go along with him. fuckin' cold windy to hang out, might as well join Fat Harold.

The church they go to is on the corner c and Third, and it is called First Baptisi Abyssinian Church of Isola. Hooper is glad warm inside church, because as far as he' concerned the rest of it is all bullsh He's dropped out of school because he doesn't do good reading none o his teachers ever realized he was dyslexic but one thing he learn fr all those history books he stru through was that most of the wars th ever on this planet was because one religion tried to another religi it was the only true way to God. what the preacher is laying down in church this morning all this stuff about Jesus crucified by the Roma or the Jews or whoever fuck did it, Hooper doesn't know and doesn't a damn is all a lot of bullshit to him. These people want to believe fairy tales about virgins getting pregnant without nobody fucking th that was their business. All Hooper was doing here was getting warm.

They're out of church by a little past noon. Fat Harold wants to go this crack house he knows, buy himself a nickel vial, pass the time smoking some dope. But Hooper tells him what's the sense he just wen church and prayed his ass off for salvation if the next minute he's on the pipe, does that make sense, man? He tells Fat Harold why don' use the five bucks they go see a movie and buy some popcorn? Fat Har thinks he rather go smoke some dope. So they part company on Ainsley this is now maybe ten past twelve, a quarter past and Fat Harold goe his way to the crack house where he's gonna find hope in a pipe, man and Hooper walks crosstown and a little ways uptown on The Stem to w this movie theater is playing a new picture with Eddie Murphy in it.

Uptown.

Is where this movie theater is.

Uptown.

Where Eddie Murphy and Bill Cosby live.

Hooper knows he is walking into white turf, he • wasn't born yesterd But, man, this is Easter Sunday and all he's doing is going to a fuc movie where there's hundreds of white people standing on line outsid waitin' to see a black man up there on the screen. Handful of blacks the line, too, here and there, guys all silked up, sportin' for they

girls, this is Easter Sunday, it'll be cool, man, no sweat.

Hooper wishes he had a girl with him, too. But he broke up with this chick last month 'cause she was mad he dropped out of school, which for the best if she didn't understand how he wasn't getting nowhere that fuckin' school, what was the sense wastin' his time there? Lear more on a stree corner in ten minutes than you did in school the who fuckin' tenn. But on days like today, dudes all around him with they girls, he misses her. makes him feel like some kind of jerk, anyway going to a movie alone.

Eddie Murphy takes care of that, though.

Eddie Murphy makes him feel good.

You see a handsome black man up there, hell and not takin' any shit Whitey, it you feel real good. Eddie Murphy probably lived a big hou on a hill overlooking the ocean. Probably had blonde girls coming in suck his cock and his feet with they hair like the preacher was about Jesus's feet this morning. You was Eddie, Murphy, you could buy anyt in the world you". wanted, have anything you wanted. Didn't matter' was black. You was Eddie Murphy, man! In movie theater, sitting ther the dark with mostly white people, Hooper likes to wet his pants laughing every time Eddie Murphy does another one of his shrewd thin White people all around him are laughing, too. Not at any dumb nigge but at dumb Charlie who the nigger's fuckin' around. Hooper doesn't completely understand why all these white people are laughin' at the ownelves, but he knows it makes him feel damn good.

He is still feeling good when he comes out of the theater at two-thirty, around then. It isn't snowing yet, but it sure feels like it's gonna start any minute.

Still windy as can be, great big gusts blowin' in off the River Harb cuttin' clear to the marrow. He can walk home one of two ways. He ca down on The Stem to North Fifth, and then come crosstown the three blocks to his own building on Culver, where maybe some of the guys'l hangin' out, or he can go directly crosstown on Eleventh where the theater is, and then walk downtown on Culver, six of one, half a doz of the other except that the Eleventh Street route will take him straight through an exclusively Italian neighborhood.

Hooper does not belong to any of the neighborhood street gangs. Neit does he do dope nor run dope for any of the myriad crack dealers who what the newspapers call "a blight on the urban landscape." He is no good student, but this does not make him a bad person. The color of skin does not make him a bad person, either. He is black.

I-

He knows he is black. But he has never done a criminal thing in his life. Never. (He repeats the word fervently to Carella now: "Never!" This is no small achievement in a neighborhood where the word "bad" often used with pride. I'm a baaaaad nigger, man. If Hooper's gonna be any kind of nigger, it's gonna be a good one. Like Eddie Murphy. (He tells this to Carella, too, driving the point home by rapping a clenched fist on his T-shirted chest.)

The Italian-Americans on Eleventh Street are so far removed in time, space and attitude from their heritage in Naples or Palermo that they could, if they chose to, safely drop the hyphenated form. These are Americans, period, born and bred on the turf they now inhabit with somewhat confused and confusing ethnic pride. These are kids whose great-great-grandparents came here as immigrants at the turn of the century. Kids whose great-grandparents were first-generation Americans.

Kids whose grandparents fought against Italy in World War II, whose parents were teenagers in the Sixties, and who themselves are now teenagers who do not speak Italian and who do not care to learn, thank you. They are Americans. And it is American to cherish home and family. American to protect one's neighborhood from evil infiltration, American to cherish God and country and to make sure no niggers fuck your sisters.

Hooper is aware of them at once.

He has come perhaps a block and a half crosstown: from The Stem when he sees them on the front of the building. There are six of them. This is Easter Sunday and they are all silked out in their new Easter threads hanging out and kidding around, laughing.

He tells himself that's all they're doing is hanging out and kidding around, laughing, but warning hackles go up on the back of his neck, anyway. He should not be here. He should have gone down The Stem to Fifth Street instead, he was dumb to come across Eleventh where up at all of a sudden the horseplay stops and the laughter stops and there is a dead silence, they have spotted him.

He figures he should cross the street.

Would Eddie Murphy cross the street?

Sheee-it, man, no! Hooper's got as much right as these dudes to be wherever the fuck he wants to be, man but his heart is pounding. He knows there is going to be trouble. He can smell it on the air, he can feel it coming his way on the wind, blowin' on the wind, man, touching his black skin like somebody usin' a cattle prod on him.., trouble.. danger.., run!

But would Eddie Murphy run?

He does not run.

He does not cross the street.

He keeps walking toward where the six of them have now come off the stoop and are standing on the sidewalk in a casual phalanx, hands dangling loosely at their sides like gunslicks about to draw, narrow smiles on their faces, say somethin' smart, he thinks, say somethin' cool, be Eddie Murphy, man! But nothing smart comes. Nothing cool co

He smiles.

"Hey, man," he says to the closest one.

And the baseball bat comes swinging out nowhere.

"Do you know which one used the bat?" asked.

"No," Hooper said.

"They all had bats," Seronia said.

"That was later," Hooper said. "When they chasin' me. All at once, t all got bats. Or can lids. It was that first bat bust my head, thou "Cause it took me by surprise. It musta been one them standin' in th back had the bat hid, you know' So when I come up, I'm like a sittin duck, know? I give 'em my shit-eatin' grin, I say man' politely, and wham the bat comes somewhere hid behind them, breaks my head open., "What happened then?"

"I ran, man, whutchoo think happen? They six them who all at once go ball bats, and they nigger and whatnot, man I know a lynch mob I see one. I got the hell out of there fast as my could carry me. But that wasn't gonna be the end it, far as they was concerned. They was righ me, all six of 'em, cussin' and yellin' and chasin' off they turf. I figured once I got to Culver I be I could run downtown on Culver, ge the hell Eleventh Street..."

"You was crazy goin' in there in the first place," Seronia said.

"It was Easter," Hooper said in explanation, and shrugged.

"All right, they're chasing you," Carella said.

"Yeah, and I'm thinkin' I gotta get off the street, I stay here on t street, they goan kill me. I gotta be someplace where they witnesses

restaurant, a bar, anythin' where they people can see what's happenin' if it goes that far. "Cause it sounds like it's goin' all the way, man it sounds like they out to kill me."

"Then what?"

"All at once, I see this church up ahead. I never been inside it in life, but there it is, and I figure there's got to be people inside church, don't there, this is Easter Sunday. I like was losin' track time by then, I didn't realize there wouldn't be no services two-thirty, three o'clock, whatever it was by then.

But the front door was open... "Standing open?"

"No, no. Unlocked. I tried it and it was unlocked.

They were right behind me, man, it's a good thing it wasn't locked, be dead right there on the church steps. So I ran in with my head open and drippin' blood and them behind me yellin' and I hear more yellin' from someplace in the church, and the first thing I think is they got me surrounded, man, there's yellin' behind me and yellin' in front of me, I'm a dead man."

"What do you mean, yelling in front of you?"

"From like behind these columns. Two people el "

Y hng.

"Behind what columns?"

"Where they on the right side of the church, know? They's like these columns and what I must be a little room back there 'cause..."

"Is that where the yelling was coming from? little room behind the columns? On the right side of the church?"

"I'm only sayin' it was a room, I was never in

But this door opened, and a priest came out..."

"From the room?"

"From whatever was there behind the door. heard all the yellin' in the church, you see. them yellin' nigger and they was goin' to kill me, that and heard me yellin' Help, somebody help So he came out lookin' surprised and scared and thing he sees is me spillin' blood from my head, he goes, "What's this, what's this?" like he believe it, you know here's a nigger bleedin' on floor and six white guys chasin' him. So

yell, man, hep me, they goan kill me!' and the priest what's happeni now, gets it all in a flash, man, steps between me and them and tell them get luck outa his church, tells them this is God's how dare the all that shit. Meanwhile called the cops, and by the time they showe was a big crowd outside, everybody yellin' screamin' even if they di know what the was happenin'. It was the priest walked me to hospital The cops were too scared. If you're write up a report..."

"I am."

"You better mention them fucks was too scared to put me in the car a drive me the six blocks to Greer. I had to walk it with the priest."

"I'll mention it," Carella said.

A lot of good it'll do, he thought. The police protected their own. was a simple, perhaps regrettable fact. But he would mention it.

"You say the priest was arguing with someone when you came into the.

"Yeah."

"Who, do you know?"

"No. It was behind the door there."

"A man? A woman?"

"A man, I think. There were six fuckin guys tryin'a kill me, you thi gave a shit who..."

"How do you know they were arguing?" "'Cause they were yellin' at ea other."

"Did you hear anything they said?"

"Just these loud voices."

"Two voices? Or more than two?"

"I don't know."

"Well... after it was all over.., did you see anyone?"

"What do you mean?"

"Coming out of that room."

"Oh. No. We went straight to the hospital. The cops opened up a path the crowd out there, and me and the priest went through. I didn't se

nobody else inside the church."

"You know Father Michael was killed Thursday night, don't you?" "Sure," Hooper said. "And I know who done T00."

Carella looked at him.

"Them wops," Hooper said. "They made a vow they gonna get both me and the priest. For happened on Easter. So now they got the priest, that means I'm next. And for what? For walkin' "

the street mindin' myown fuckin' business." "For being' black," Sero said.

Carella had no argument.

"It was very nice of you to come up here, Lund," Hawes said. "I know it's Saturday, and I to intrude on your time." "Not at all," she said. "Happy to help in any I can."

The clock on the wall read twenty minutes eleven. Krissie was wearing blue jeans, boots, a white T-shirt, and a fringed leather vest. makeup except lipstick and eye linei'. Long hair pulled to the back of her in a ponytail. smelled of spring flowers.

"As I told you on the phone, the lab sent over whole batch of letter and bills and whatnot, Father Michael's stuff, you know, which I finished going through. The point is, the lab some very good latents them, and we..."

"Latents?"

"Father Michael's, of course, but also some wild prints that may have been left by the killer. In case he'd been in the office looking through the files for something, which is still a possibility because of the open file drawer and the papers on the floor. Okay, so far?" "Yes," Krissie said, and smiled.

"So what we're trying to do is track down the wild prints the ones we know for sure weren't left by Father Michael and eliminate whoever may have had a legitimate reason to be handling the papers. One of the logical..." "Yes, his secretary," Krissie said, and smiled.

"Yes, would be a logical choice. Typing them, filing them, and so on

"Yes."

"You look very pretty this morning," he said.

The words startled her. They startled him, too. He hadn't expected to say them out loud. A second earlier, he'd only been thinking them.

"Well, thank you," Krissie said.

"Sorry," he said.

"No, no."

"But you do."

"Well, thanks."

There was an awkward silence. They stood side by side in a shaft of sunlight streaming through the window. The squadroom was unusually silent this morning. Somewhere down the hall, a telephone rang. Outside on the street, a horn honked.

"The thing is," he said, and cleared his throat, "the killer did touch any of the papers ... and chances are he at least had his hands on the stuff he threw over the floor then by eliminating as many latents as can, we might have a shot at identification later on. If we come up with

which so far we haven't. But if we do."

"Yes." "Which is why I asked you to stop by to have prints taken, if it's no bother." "No bother at all," she said.

"It'll take ten, fifteen minutes at the most."

"I've always wondered what it'd be like to have my fingerprints taken."

"Really? Well, here's your chance to find out." "Yes," she said.

"Yes," he said, and cleared his throat again.

"Are you catching a cold?" she asked.

"No, I don't think so."

"Because you keep clearing your throat, know..."

"No, that's..."

"So I thought maybe..."

"No, that's a nervous reaction," Hawes said.

"Oh," she said.

"Yes."

"Oh."

They looked at each other.

"Well, how do we do this?" she asked.

"Well... if you'll step over to this table..."

"Just like in the movies, huh?"

"Sort of."

"I've never had my fingerprints taken before," she said.

"Yes, I know."

"Did I tell you?"

"Yes." "Oh. Then it must be true," she said.

"Yes."

"The first thing I have to do," he said, "is lock my pistol in the drawer there because what happened once I don't know how long ago that was -

- a police officer somewhere in the city was fingerprinting a felon and the guy grabbed the gun and shot him dead." "Oh my!" Krissie said.

"Yeah," Hawes said. "So now it's a rule that whenever we're fingerprinting anyone, we have to take off the gun."

He walked over to his desk, dropped his pistol into one of the deep drawers on the right-hand side, locked the drawer, and then came back to the fingerprinting table. Krissie watched apprehensively as he began squirting black ink from a tube onto a pane of glass.

"This stuff washes right off with soap and water," he said.

"Thank God," she said.

"Oh sure, nothing to worry about."

"You must be an expert at this," she said.

"Well, it becomes second nature. Although we rarely do it anymore. That is all done at Central Booking now. Downtown. At Headquarters." "Mug

and printing," she said. "Is that what you call it?"

"Yes."

"Mugging and printing," she said again.

"Yes." He was rolling the ink onto the glass now spreading it evenly. She watched him with interest.

"You have to spread it, huh?" she said.

"Yes."

"Like blackberry jam," she said.

"I never thought of it that way," he said, and down the roller. "The we go. Now I'll just take of these cards..."

He took a fingerprint card from the rack at back of the table.

"And if you'll let me have your right first..."

She extended her hand to him.

"I have to... uh... sort of... uh... if you'll just your hand hang s of... uh... Loose... I have to them on the glass first, you see, eac finger..."

"I hope this stuff really washes off," she said.

"Oh, yes, with soap and water, I promise. that's better."

She was sort of standing with her right hip sort against him somewha his arms sort of cradling her arm, sort of holding her hand in both hands as he rolled her fingers one at a time on the glass, and then rolled them in turn on the fingerprint card... "Now the thumb," he s

"Am I doing this right?" she asked.

"Just let me do it," he said, "just relax, that's the "

way... ... sort of standing very close to each other in the silent sunwashed squadroom, he could smell the scent of her flowery perfume "Now the other hand," he said.

... sort of guiding each finger onto the glass, rolling it there, lifting it, rolling it onto the card, sort of moving together with a special rhythm now, her

hand in his, her hip sort of molded in against him... "This is sort

fun," she said.

"Yes," he said, "can you have dinner with me tonight?" "I'd love to," she said.

She'd finally chosen the Walther PPK, a neat little .32 caliber automatic with an eight-shot capacity.

Shad Russell had showed her some guns that had five, six-shot capacities, but she figured if push came to shove she might need the few extra cartridges.

Seven in the magazine, he'd told her, another in the breech. He'd also showed her some .22 caliber pistols, but she insisted on the heavier firepower.

Shad told her the caliber didn't mean a thing. You could sometimes do more damage with a .22 than with a .45. She didn't believe him. If you bring down a giant, you didn't go after him with pea shooter.

She wasn't even sure this gun would do the job, but all of his bigger caliber guns seemed either too bulky or too heavy. The Walther had a three-inch barrel, with an overall length of only a foot and a half inches, and the lightweight model she chose weighed only a bit more than twelve ounces. It fit snugly in her handbag, alongside of and very much bulkier than her wallet. Shad charged her six hundred dollars for the gun. She figured that his profit on this deal alone would pay for a vacation at Lake Como.

She had discovered that a person did not "shoot to the limit" when she was carrying an unlicensed pistol. She suspected that not many such gun-toters shoot to the speed limit, either. Or spit on the sidewalk. even raised their voices in public places. She was breaking the law. And would break it further if she had to. Break it to the limit if she had to. Her bag heavier with the gun. The weight reassuring.

She had spent this Saturday morning shopping in the midtown area, and boarded a uptown-bound, graffiti-covered subway train twenty past two. She was not in the habit of expensive taxi rides all over the city, but she did plan on changing her habits now. Moreover, she sensed that there would be safety in crowded places; they had spooked yesterday when she led them directly to a cop.

The train rattled along in the underground dark.

Marilyn wondered if there were such things as passionate, poetic men who looked like lions and made their homes in subway caves. She wondered if there were alligators in the city's sewers. She wondered if there were

such a thing as happily ever after.

The train pulled into a station stop.

The doors hissed open.

She watched the passengers coming on. She did not expect anyone even remotely resembling her two Hispanics to board. The doors hissed shut again. The train was in motion.

It was two-thirty-five when she got off the train uptown on The Stem and began walking northward toward the river. She was certain that they where she lived, had undoubtedly followed her from there to the school. As she approached Silvermine Oval now, her eyes swept both sides of street ahead. Her handbag was slung on her left shoulder.

Her right hand rested on its open top, hovering over the butt of the Walther.

Nothing.

She kept walking.

Entered the Oval, came around it. Nanny pushing a baby carriage in the bright sunshine. Such a lovely day. The weight of the gun in her bag. Around Oval and onto Harborside. The small park across street from her house. Potential danger there. A man approaching on the park side of the street. Short wearing a tan sports jacket. Little mustache under his nose. Charlie Chaplin lookalike. Went on by, in his own thoughts. She scanned the park entrance. Nothing.

1211 Harborside was just ahead, on her left. One on either side of the street, not a sign of life in the park. A pigeon fluttered overhead, glided over the park fence, settled on the walk inside the gate. She approached the building and fished into her pocket for her keys, the back of her hand brushing against the Walther. Found the keys, unlocked locks on the door, came into the entryway, secured the locks behind her. She was wearing Chanel ripoff, blue skirt and blue jacket with a ruff. Unbuttoning the jacket, she went to answering machine, saw that she had messages, and pressed the playback button.

"Honey, it's me."

Willis's voice.

"Did you make dinner reservations for Toni? Because I didn't, and it's Saturday night, and have a hell of a time this late. I kind of feel Italian, don't you? Do you think you could Mangia Bene? I'm at the 1 I should be around four-thirty, see you then, love ya."

She looked at her watch.

Ten minutes to three.

"Hello, Miss. Willis, this is Sylvia Bourne, I'm the real estate person you were talking to Thursday night, at the open house? Oliphant Real Estate Co-op? I wonder if you and Mr. Hollis have had a chance to think about that penthouse apartment? I'm sure the sponsor would entertain a bid lower than the three-fifty, if you'd care to make an offer. Let me know what you think, won't you? It's negotiable. I know I gave you my card, but here's the number again."

As she reeled off the number twice, no less Marilyn wondered why no one could ever get their names straight. It would be worth getting married just so they'd have only one name to worry about.

"Hello, Marilyn?"

A woman's voice.

"It's Eileen."

Eileen?

"Burke. If you've got a minute, can you give me a call? At home, please. A few things I'd like to discuss with you. Here's the number."

Marilyn listened to the number, writing, thinking this had to be mental telepathy. Yesterday she'd thought of calling Eileen about a gun, and today Eileen was calling her. The difference was that today she already had a gun. And she still wasn't sure Eileen liked her very much. So call me? And, conversely, do I like her enough to call her back?

First things first, she thought.

Mangia Bene.

She found the number in her personal diary, dialed it, said she was calling for Detective Willis why not a little P.D. muscle on a Saturday night? and asked if they could take two of them at eight o'clock. Unconsciously, she looked at her watch again. Three o'clock sharp. He'd be home in an hour and a half. She waited while the waiter checked his reservation book, clucking his tongue all while. Finally, he said, "Si, Signora Willis, two of you at eight, we look forward to seeing you then Willis again."

She cradled the phone, debated calling right that minute, get it over with, decided she rather bathe first. Slinging her shoulder bag, went upstairs to the third floor of the house.

They were waiting for her in the bedroom.

She went for the gun.

She went for it at once, not a moment's hesitation, right hand across her body and dipping into the open mouth of the bag, fingers curling around the grip, gun coming up and out of the bag, forefinger inside trigger guard, thumb snapping off the safety, gun leveling to --

He was on her in an instant.

The big one.

Moving swiftly across the Persian rug on the parqueted floor, past the canopied bed and the love seat upholstered in royal-blue crushed velvet.

He was an experienced street fighter, he did not grab for the gun, the gun was where the danger was. He came up on her left side instead, ducking inside the gun hand and throwing his shoulder against her chest before she could pull off a shot. She stumbled backward. He hit her in the face, his huge fist bunched. She felt immediate pain, and brought her left hand up at once, forgetting the gun, the shrieking, cupping nose, pulling her hand away. Covered with blood. He took the gun out of her as if taking a toy from a naughty child. She had broken her nose. The pain was. Blood poured onto her hand, blood dripped through her fingers, blood stained her blouse and the front of her jacket, blood splattered onto the Persian rug, wondered abruptly if the stains would come out, pain, where was the gun?

He was grinning.

Big fucking gorilla standing there grinning she held back the scream that bubbled into throat, the small gun in his huge hand, King standing on the Empire State Building airplanes.

"No more of that," he said in Spanish, grinning. The other one, the handsome one, was into the bathroom. She kept her eyes on the ugly one who had hurt her. He did not know there also a switchblade knife in her bag. She would hit his throat the moment she had a chance. The handsome one came out of the bathroom.

"Here," he said in Spanish and handed her one of her good bath towels. White. With the initials monogrammed on it in curlicued lettering for royalty. Gold on white. She did not want to stain good towel. But she was bleeding all over the face. She put the towel to her nose.

"Noses bleed a lot," the ugly one said in Spanish, • as if making a comment on the weather.

The other one merely nodded.

"Do you have a license for this gun?" the ugly one said in Spanish, laughed.

She said nothing.

Held the towel to her nose, trying to stop the flow of blood. Nothing do for the pain. The pain shrieked and shrieked. She kept her teeth clenched to keep from screaming. She would not scream. She would not reveal her terror. She would wait for the proper moment, and then go the knife. Cut him.

Hurt him the way he had hurt her. And then go after the other one, the handsome one.

"Answer him," he said.

In Spanish. They were both speaking Spanish, assuming she understood recognizing that if she was in fact Mary Ann Hollis, then she too would speak Spanish, she had learned Spanish in that fucking Mexican hellhole and had polished it on her knees in Buenos Aires. She pretended not understand.

Stupidity, she realized. The initials MH were on every towel in the bathroom.

"Did you hear me?" the handsome one said.

"Answer him!" "I don't understand you," she said in English.

"She doesn't understand us," he said in Spanish, • "so knock out all fucking teeth."

The big one moved toward her, turning the gun up in his hand, flipping it so that the butt was in position. He was grinning again.

"No," she said.

"No what?" the handsome one said.

In Spanish.

"No, don't hit me," she said.

In English.

"I don't understand you," he said in Spanish.

"No me pegues, por favor," she said.

"Muy bien," the handsome one said. "Now will speak only Spanish, comprendes?"

"St;" she said, "solo espahol."

Until I go for the knife, she thought.

"Do you know why we're here?" he asked.

"No."

"Do you know who we are?"

"No."

"My name is Ramon Castaneda. My colleague Carlos Ortega."

She nodded.

"Do you think it foolhardy of us? Telling you names?" She said nothi

"We trust you not to tell anyone after gone," Ramon said.

"Or we'll come back to kill you," Carlos said, grinned.

The gun was no longer in his hand. Had he in his pocket? She should been paying attention, but she'd been too fucking intent on Spanish lesson, too afraid the big one, Carlos, would really use the gun on teeth. She had let them frighten her. They had won the first small battle, not even a battle, a tiny skirmish, frightening her into revealing that she spoke Spanish fluently. But they'd known this already. Just as they knew she was Marilyn Hollis. Or, more accurate Mary Ann Hollis. On the street yesterday, they had called her first Marianna and then Mariucha. They knew her as Mary Ann Hollis. In whi case she could claim... "What do you...?" she started in English, an immediately switched to Spanish. "What do you want here?"

"The money," Ramon said.

Straight to the point, she thought.

"What money?"

"The money you stole from Alberto Hidalgo," Carlos said.

Even more directly to the point.

"Four hundred million Argentine australes," Ramon said.

"Two million dollars American," Carlos said.

"We want it back."

A pair of international bankers discussing high finance in Spanish.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said.

Still speaking Spanish. This was a cozy little g among high-born Spanish-speaking people. was a tea party on the duchess's lawn. The duchess had invited the two bankers here to meet dazzling international traveler, Mary Ann Hollis.. whose nose was still bleeding into a white towel.

"You must be mistaking me for someone else she said in Spanish.

Everyone speaking Spanish. How nice to have second language.

"No, there's no mistake," Ramon said.

"We know who you are, and we know you the money," Carlos said.

"And we'll kill you if you don't give it back us," Ramon said simply slight shrug of his shoulders, this was merely one of the rules international banking.

"Marilyn Hollis?" she said. "Are you looking someone named Marilyn Hollis?"

"No, we're..."

"Because that's my name, you see, and..."

"Shut up," the ugly one said.

Very softly.

The word sounding not at all menacing Spanish, cdllate, the word rolled mellifluously his tongue, cdllate, shut up.

"Your name is Mary Ann Hollis," he said. softly. Explaining something a very young possibly quite stupid child.

"Ah, bien," she said, "there's the mis..."

"No," he said.

The word identical in English and in Spanish.

No.

Softly.

No, we've made no mistake. You are Mary Ann I-Iollis. And we are going to kill you if you don't give us the money you stole from Hidalgo.

All in that single word.

No.

The bag was still on her shoulder.

The knife was in the bag.

The clock on the mantel read 3:15.

I should be home around four-thirty, see you then, love ya.

No sense wishing for the cavalry. Do or die. Go for the knife, or... clock ticked into the room. Her nose had stopped bleeding. She tossed the towel aside, seeing her own reflection in the ornately flamed mirror opposite the bed, her reverse image partially obscured by the backs of the two gentlemen from Buenos Aires.

"I have identification," she said. "My driver's license..."

The one to go for was the big one.. "... my credit cards..."

Him first.

"We don't need identification," the handsome one said. Ramon. "We know exactly who you are."

"But that's just it, you see..."

Moving across the room toward where the big one with his hands dangling at his sides.

"If I can prove that I'm not who you think I am..."

Her hand dropping into the bag as she moved.

"... then you'll realize your mistake, and you'll..."

"There is no mistake," Ramon said, shaking head.

Fingers searching for the knife.

"But there is. Look, I'd be happy to pay back..." "Then pay us and s up!" Ramon said.

Fingers closing on the handle of the knife.

"... but I'm just not this person you think I am. mean it. Truly."

"Enough of this shit!" Carlos said.

Verdad, she thought, and yanked the knife out the bag.

Her mistake was going high.

She should have gone low instead, for the plunge the blade in low, r it across his belly, hands would have had to cross in front of his b block the thrust, a clumsy unnatural maneuver. instead she went for throat. Arm stiff extended, right hand clutching the handle of knife blade going for his throat like a matador, sword, that was her mista Because his hands up at once in a fighter's instinctive defensive fi clenched for the tick of an instant, and then hands opening when he recognized in instant's beat exactly what was happening here, was co at him with a knife, this was a here!

His eyes said Oh, yeah?

Ah sf?

In which case I will break your fucking face.

She saw those eyes at once, read those eyes, had seen the message in those eyes many times before when she'd been repeatedly beaten and r in that Mexican prison, and she thought No, mister, never again, and stopped the knife in mid-thrust because his hands were there and she did not want those massive fingers closing on her wrist.

She shifted her stance, stood wide-legged and fierce, the knife moving in tiny circles, waiting for his move. He was not going for the gun his pocket or wherever the hell he'd put it. This meant that he respected the knife. You didn't grow up a fucking hoodlum in B.A. without having been cut at least once. You didn't spend time in a Mexican prison, either, without becoming an expert on reading eyes.

The big one's eyes were saying that she was the one with the knife, he did not want to get cut. Her eyes were saying If you make a move the gun, I'll

go for your eyes. I'll blind you. Mexican standoff.

She'd forgotten the handsome one.

He moved in as gracefully and as swiftly as a flamenco dancer. She caught his motion almost a moment too late, spotted him from the tail of her eye, and turned immediately to her right as he lunged for her. She thought again, No, mister, and swung the knife out in a wide slashing arc, backhanded. He put out his hand as if trying to deflect the thrust and then started to pull it back when he remembered cold hard steel but he was too late. She caught him. It ripped through the meaty flesh of his hand, just below the pinky, horizontally, opening a wide bloody gash. He "Aiiii," and caught the hand in his free hand, one, cradling it, trying to cradle it, pulling in against his body, his face going pale, glazing over in fear, the blood covering now what she went for him again.

And cut him again.

Slashed out viciously at both hands where they were in tight against his belly, the blade across the knuckles of the left hand, slashing to the bone. He began whimpering. His running. He stood there with terror in his nose running, his hands bleeding, baby. She had them both in her line of sight the handsome one backing away toward the whimpering, the girl still nowhere in sight wondered why the big one didn't pull the trigger she realized in a sudden exhilarating they could not kill her; if they killed her, never get the money they'd come for. In they inhabited, did not kill except as an example to other debtors. If you your money you threatened and you they could hurt her very badly - but you Not if you wanted your money. They her!

felt suddenly invincible.

"Come on," she said.

swinging out ahead of her.

on, you cocksuckers!"

Spanish, so they'd know exactly what she was feeling testing the air.

want it? Come get it! Come on/" handsome one was still whimpering.

kept his hands tucked in against his belly. His was covered with blood

big one's eyes had naked murder in them. almost burst out laughing. wanted to kill he couldn't. Anger twisted his features, caused his legs to quiver. His fury was ., a towering rage that set him trembling volcano about to erupt. His face was livid, clenched, mouth twitching

eyes blazing.

come on," she said.

he would come.

wishing he would come.

you, she thought.

out your eyes.

i backed away from her instead, guiding the one around her, his eyes never leaving the cautiously back and away from her, her toward the bedroom door, Marilyn that the knife was always between them, the ai The handsome one could not stop whimpering. At the door, the big one whis, "Volverernos."

Which meant "We'll be back."

Nobody on Eleventh Street knew anything what had happened on Easter Sunday. This me that everybody in the neighborhood knew exac. what h happened. But around here, there was need to talk to cops ever. If somebody was you, you went to people who could do about it. The only thing cops could do was parking tickets and sit around with their th their asses.

Around here, they told a story about these black guys went in the Ca Grot one night. was a restaurant on Ainsley, it was actually Grotto Capri, but everybody called it the Grot, even the guys who owned it. these guys walk in on a crowded Friday night, they're strapped with guns like .45s or Magnums, depended on who was telling the sto. And shove the guns in the cashier's face and announce this is a stickup, man, and the he just stands there with his arms folded across chest, shaking his head. Like he can't believe happening, man! Four dumb fucking walking into a place has Mafia written up one and down the other, they're here pulling a Amazing! So they clean out the cash register and

off in the night, and the headwaiter is still there shaking his head the wonder of it all.

Next day one of the niggers comes back to the restaurant. His arm is a sling, and his right eye is half-closed and there's a bandage wrapped around his head from where somebody busted it for him.

He's carrying a briefcase. He asks to see the owner and then he tell him some friends of his made a terrible mistake last night, coming i here the way they done, and like, man, here's all the money back, le

let bygones be bygones, man, keep the briefcase, too, it's a Mark Cr
People around here still laughed at that story.

Which is why nobody around here went to the cops when they had any k
of problem that needed solving. They went instead to the people who
what to do about it. Which is why on any given Friday night, the
customers at the Capri Grot could park their Benzes or their Jags
outside and nobody would even dream of touching them. And if the car
happened to be double-
parked in a clearly marked No Parking zone, that
was okay, too, because some of the cops on the beat here were also i
the pockets of the people you went to whenever you had a problem. Wh
is why you didn't tell cops a fucking thing around here, even if the
asked you was your mother a virgin before she got married.

Nobody on the street knew who had busted that nigger's head on Easte
Sunday.

Nobody on the street even knew there'd been trouble at all that day.

Except Angelo Di Napoli.

Di Napoli was thirty-seven years old, a cop family name (which
translated as "of Naples" promised short and dark with curly black h
who was in fact an even six feet tall with blond and blue eyes. Di
Napoli was a recent transfer to Eight-
Seven from the CPEP Unit at the
Five-

One Riverhead. CPEP was an acronym for £ Police Enrichment Program,
a law concept rudely imitative of the foot-
patrol pro. in several other
large American cities. Here in city, the centralized 911 emergency
response s' had gone into effect some thirty years ago, brin with it
need for quick motorized response, leaving in its wake a reduction i
the number of fo patrols. Then, as so often happened when became
confused with quality, many police began thinking that motorized pat
was in a more diverse and interesting assignment, with attendant res
that those poor souls assigned to foot beat approached the job with
than enthusiasm. All by way of saying that the officer was almost
entirely eliminated in the scheme of law enforcement and crime
prevention.

CPEP pronounced Cee-
Pep by the department had been designed to correct
was now perceived as an error. Its sole intent was re-establish the
foot-
patrol cop as an essential part the process of essential contact
between police and community. Di Napoli had been a part of the highl
effective Narcopoc Drive, a combined blues-and-

suits operation aimed at
narcotic pockets in the Fifty-
First precinct and resulting in a total of
some ten thousand buy-and-
bust arrests. It was a measure of the man that
he considered it a challenge to be transferred to the newly organize
CPEP Unit at the Eight-Seven, under the command of a sergeant who'd
initiated Operation Clean Sweep out of the notorious Hundred-and-
First
in Majesta. Di Napoli was a good cop and a dedicated cop. Like any g
cop, he listened. And like any dedicated cop, he put what he heard t
good use.

He would not have known that Carella was on the job if Carella hadn'
introduced himself. Di Napoli couldn't recall seeing him around the
station house, but then again he was new here. They exchanged the us
pleasantries... "How's it going?"

"Little quiet."

"Well, give it time, it's Saturday."

"Yeah, I can't wait."

... and then Carella got straight to the point.

"I'm investigating the murder of that priest at St. Kate's," he said

"Yeah, Thursday night," Di Napoli said.

"That's the one. I'm looking for whoever chased a black kid into the
church on Easter Sunday." "I wasn't here then," Di Napoli said. "I o
got transferred the first of the month." He hesitated then said, "I
Edward-car panicked, huh?"

"Let's say they got out of there fast."

"The people around here laugh about it."

I'll bet." "Bad for the old image, huh?" Di Napoli said, raised his
eyebrows. "I bust my ass out here day night and two jerks run when i
gets hot."

"Have you heard anything about who it have been?"

"That jumped the black kid?"

"Yeah."

"I'll tell you," Di Napoli said, "there's a happening around here wh they're starting to proud of it, you know what I mean? neighborhood people. They like the idea these beat up the black kid and got away it. That cops cooled it, you know? For whatever reason, the hell kno maybe Edward-car was afraid they'., have a riot on their hands, who knows? The point a kid got beat up, and nobody paid for it. Nobody. around here they're saying Yeah, it served him n he shoulda stayed i his own neighborhood, wh he come around here, and so on, this is a neighborhood, we don't need niggers coming in...!"

Di Napoli shook his head.

"I'm Italian, you know," he said, "I guess you too, but I can't stan the way Italians feel people. It's a fuckin' shame the way they Mayb they don't know how much prejudice there still around about us, you know? Italians. Maybe they don't know you say somebody's Italian he' supposed to be a thief or a ditchdigger or a guy singing 0 Sole Mio restaurant with checked tablecloths and Chianti bottles dripping wax I'm only a cop, I mean I know I'm not a fuckin' account executive or bank president, but there're Italians who are, you realize that? So get these dumb wops in this neighborhood ... that's exactly what the are, excuse me, they're dumb fucking wops .. they beat up this black and then they laugh about it later and all Italians suffer. All of u hate it. Man, I absolutely hate it."

"You sound like you know who did it," Carella said.

"Not completely. But I've been listening, believe me."

"And what've you heard?"

"I heard a guy in his forties, he's in the construction business, hi name is Vinnie Corrente, I heard he's been bragging to people that h son Bobby was the one used the bat. I didn't hear him say this personally, otherwise his ass would be up the station house and I'd reading him Miranda, the dumb fucking wop."

"On the other hand..."

"On the other hand, you're investigating a "Uh-huh."

"So maybe you got probable to pull him in."

"Let's say I'd like to talk to him."

"Let's say he's in apartment 41 at 304 North." "Thanks," Carella sai

"Hey, come on," Di Napoli said, pleased.

304 North Eleventh was a five-story brick set in row of identical

buildings undoubtedly put up by same contractor at the turn of the century, when neighborhood was still considered desirable. three-thirty

that afternoon, several old wearing the black mourning dresses and y could see on widows all over Italy were in late afternoon sunshine o the front chatting in Italian. Carella nodded good them, and then wa through them and past into the building foyer. He found a nameplate V. Corrente in apartment 41, began climbing the steps.

The building was scrupulously clean.

Mouth-watering cooking smells wafted in hallways, suffused the stairwells. Oregano thyme. Sweet sausage. Fresh basil. Delectable simmering in olive oil and garlic.

Carella kept climbing.

He found apartment 41 to the right of the on the fourth-floor landing.

He listened at the for a moment, heard nothing, and knocked on door.

"Who is it?" a man's voice said.

"Police," Carella answered.

There was a brief silence.

"Just a minute," the man said.

Carella waited.

He heard several locks coming undone, and then the door opened some three inches or so, held by a night chain.

"Let's see your badge," the man said.

Gruff no-nonsense voice, somewhat gravelly. A smoker's voice. Or a drinker's.

Carella flipped open his leather case to show a blue-enamelled, gold detective's shield and a laminated I.D. card. "Detective Carella," h said.

"Eighty-seventh Squad." "What's this about, Carella. the man asked. He had still not taken the chain off the door. In the narrow wedge betw door and jamb, Carella could dimly perceive a heavysset man with a stubble on his cheeks, dark hooded eyes.

"Want to open the door?" he asked.

"Not till I know what this is about," the man said.

"Are you Vincent Corrente?"

"Yeah?"

Surprise in his voice.

"I'd like to ask you a few questions, Mr. Corrente, if that's okay with you," Carella said.

"Like I said, what about?"

"Easter Sunday."

"What about Easter Sunday?"

"Well, I won't really know until I can ask some questions."

There was silence behind the door. In the end Carella thought he detected the eyes narrowing.

"What do you say?" he asked.

"I say tell me more," the man said.

"Mr. Corrente, I want to ask you about an" that occurred at St. Catherine's Church on Sunday." "I don't go to church," Corrente said

"Neither do I," Carella said. "Mr. Corrente, investigating a murder.

There was another silence. And then, and unsurprisingly, the word "murder" some worked magic - the night chain came off rattle, and the door opened wide.

Corrente was wearing a pair of brown and a tank top undershirt. He was a jowly, unkempt man with a cigar in his mouth and a smile on his face, Hey, come in, how nice to see you here on my doorstep, come in, come in, don't the way the place looks, my wife's been sick, in, Detective, please.

Carella went in.

A modest apartment, spotlessly clean Corrente's protestations and apologies. Kitchen to the right, living room dead ahead, opening from either side of it, presumably to bedrooms. From behind one of the closets a television set was going.

"Come on in the kitchen," Corrente said, "so we won't bother my wife. She's got the flu, I had to get the doctor in yesterday. You want a beer or anything?"

"Thanks, no," Carella said.

They went into the kitchen and sat opposite each other at a round, Formica-topped table. The air-shaft window was open. In the backyard, four stories below, Carella could hear some kids playing Ring-a-Leevio.

From the other room, he could hear the unintelligible drone of the television set.

Corrente lifted an open can of beer that was sitting on the table, took a long swallow from it, and then said, "So what's this about St. Catherine's?"

"You tell me."

"All I know is I heard there was some fuss there on Easter."

"That's true."

"But I don't know what."

"A black boy was badly beaten by a gang of six white boys. We think the boys were from..."

"There are no gangs in this neighborhood," Corrente said.

"Anything more than two in number, we call a gang," Carella said. "A good idea who they might've been?"

"Why should that be important to you?" Corrente asked. His cigar had gone out. He took a matchbook from his trouser pocket, struck a match and held it to the tip of the cigar, puffing, filling the kitchen with billowing smoke. "'Cause, you know," he said, "maybe this black kid has no right comin' to neighborhood, you understand?"

"I understand that's the prevailing attitude," Carella said.

"Which may not be the wrong attitude," Corrente said. "I know what you're thinking, thinking this is a bunch of prejudiced people they don't like the colored, is what you're thinking. But maybe the same thing woulda happened if the kid had been white, you follow me, Detective?" "No," Carella said, "I'm afraid I don't."

He did not like this man. He did not like the stubble on his face, or the potbelly hanging over his belt, or the stench of his cigar, or his

alleged boasts that his son Bobby had wielded the bat had broken Nat Hooper's head. Even the way said "Detective" rankled.

"This is a nice neighborhood," Corrente said. "family neighborhood. Hardworking people, clean kids. We want to keep it that way."

"Mr. Corrente," Carella said, "on Easter half a dozen nice clean kid from this nel. attacked a black kid with baseball bats and can lids chased him down the street to..."

"Yeah, the Hooper kid," Corrente said.

"Yes," Carella said. "The Hooper kid."

All of a sudden, Corrente seemed to know name of the Easter Sunday victim. All of a he seemed to know all about the fuss that happened St. Catherine's, although not ten minutes ago he hadn't known nothin from nothing.

"You familiar with this kid?" Corrente asked.

"I've talked to him."

"What'd he tell you?" "He told me what happened to him here on Eleve Street."

"Did he tell you what he was doing here on Eleventh Street?"

"He was on his way home from the..."

"No, no, never mind the bullshit," Corrente said, taking his cigar f his mouth and waving it like a conductor's baton. "Did he tell you w he was doing here?"

"What was he doing here, Mr. Corrente?"

"Do you know what they call him down the schoolyard? On Ninth Street The elementary school? You know what they call him there?" "No," Car said. "What do they call him there?"

"His nickname? Did he tell you his nickname?"

"No, he didn't."

"Go ask him what his nickname is down the schoolyard. Go ask him wha was doing here Easter Sunday, go ahead."

"Why don't you save me the trouble?" Carella said.

"Sure," Corrente said, and inhaled deeply on the cigar. Blowing out

cloud of smoke, he said, "Mr. Crack."

Carella looked at him.

"Is his nickname, right," Corrente said. "fucking nigger Crack."

There was a need that took him back here.

Something inexplicable that did, in fact, take back to the scene of murder he'd ew investigated, time and again, to stand alone in center a bedroom or a hallway or a kitchen or roof or -
- as was the case now --
a small cloisl garden suffused with the late afternoon scent hundred roses in riotous bloom.

The Crime Scene signs had all been taken the police were through with the place so far gathering evidence was concerned. But stood alone in the center of the garden, under spreading branches of the old maple, tried sense what had happened here this past evening at sunset. It was yet only a little before the priest had been slain some two hours later. Carella was not here now to weigh and to discern and to deduce, he was here to feel courtyard and this murder, to absorb the essence of it, breathe it deeply into his lungs, have it seep his bloodstream to be a part of him as his liver or his heart- for only then could he to understand it.

Mystical, yes.

A detective searching for a muse of sorts.

He recognized the absurdity of what he was doing, but bowed to it nonetheless, standing there in the shade, listening to the sounds of the springtime city beyond the high stone walls, trying to absorb through his very flesh whatever secrets the garden contained. Had not something of the murderer's rage and the victim's terror flown helter-skelter about this small, contained and silent space, to be claimed by stone or rose or blade of grass, and held forever in time like the image of a killer in a dead man's eye? And if so, if this was in fact a possibility, then was it not also possible that the terror, the rage of that final awful moment when knife entered flesh could not be recovered from all that had borne silent witness here in this garden?

He stood alone, scarcely daring to breathe.

He was not a religious man, but perhaps he was praying.

He stood there for what seemed a long time, some

ten or fifteen minutes, head bent, waiting for... He didn't know what

And at last, he took a deep breath and nodded and went back into the rectory and into the small office :led into a nook that judging from g had once served as something else, could not imagine what. There w secrets here, perhaps there were secrets everywhere.

The report from the Fingerprint Section had d him that any latents recovered from the open drawer of the file cabinet had been smudged be useful in any meaningful se There had been latents as well on the various scattered on the floor and separately delivered in evidence envelope marked CORRES FLOOR and then initialed by the lab's R.] who he might be. Some of the latents the prints lifted from the dead priest's fingers thumbs. The rest of them were wild, with possibilit that some had been left on correspondence by Kristin Lund.

Carella knelt beside the filing cabinet.

The bottom drawer, the one that had been open, was labeled:

CORRESPONDENCE GL He opened the drawer, no danger in doing since the Mobile Lab had been through here everything from a vacuum cleaner to tweezers. He felt around inside, along the back front panel; sometim people Scotch-taped to the inside of a drawer, where no one but a a thief would think of looking.

Correspondence, G-
L. Presumably, whoever thrown those papers all over the place was for something in this drawer, something with the lette of the alphabet that fell lx and L. Six letters altogether. God only knew piece of paper the vandal had been looking whether or not he'd found it. Or even whether the ransacking had had anything at all to with the murder. Carella was getting to his feet again when a voice behind him said, "Excuse me, sir."

He turned from the filing cabinets.

Two young girls were standing just inside the entrance door to the office.

They could not have been older than thirteen, fourteen at the most.

A blonde and one with hair as black as pitch.

The blonde was a classic beauty with a pale oval face, high molded cheekbones, a generous mouth, and dark brown eyes that gave her a thoughtful almost scholarly look. The other girl could have been her twin: the same delicate face, the same sculpted look, except that he hair was black and her eyes were a startling almost electric blue. E girls wore their hair in stylists' cuts that fell straight and clean the shoulders. Both were wearing sweaters, skirts and in a replay of Fifties bobby sox and loafers. They exuded a freshness that American

arrogantly assumed only their own healthy young girls possessed, but which was actually an asset of most teenage girls anywhere in the world.

"Sir," the black-haired one said, "are you with the church?"

Same one who'd spoken not a moment before.

"No," Carella said, "I'm not."

"We thought they might have sent someone," she said. "A new priest."
"No," Carella said, and showed his shield and ID card. "I'm Detective Carella, Eighty-seven Squad." "Oh," the black-haired one said.

Both girls huddled in the doorway.

"I'm investigating Father Michael's murder," Carella said... "How terrible," the blonde said.

The black-haired one nodded.

"Did you know Father Michael?" Carella asked. "Oh, yes," both girls said almost in unison.

"He was a wonderful person," the one said. "Excuse me, I'm President Gloria. My name is Gloria Keely."

"I'm Alexis O'Donnell," the blonde said. "I'm: nothing."

Carella smiled.

"Nice to meet both of you," he said.

"Nice to meet you, too," Alexis said. "means Catholic Youth Organization." ... Thoughtful brown eyes in her delicate, face. I'm nothing, she had said. Meaning she was an officer of the club. But something indeed, in she was easily the more beautiful of the two with shy, and thoroughly appealing manner. wondered how parents who had no daughter Alexis could possibly have known she turn out to be such beauty.

"Thank you," he said, and smiled.

"We were wondering about the funeral tomorrow," Gloria said. "About what time it'll be."

So we can tell the other kids."

A grimace. A shrug. Still the little girl in the developing woman's body.

"I really don't know," Carella said. "Maybe you can call the archdiocese." "Mm, yeah, good idea," she said. Electric blue eyes sparkling with intelligence, midnight hair cascading to her shoulder head bobbing in agreement with a plan already forming. "You wouldn't happen to have the number, would you?"

"I'm sorry."

"Do you know what they'll be doing about mass tomorrow?" Alexis asked.

The same soft, shy voice.

"I really don't know." "I hate to miss mass," she said.

"I guess we can go over to St. Jude's," Gloria said.

"I guess," Alexis said.

A heavy silence shouldered its way into the room, as if the priest's death had suddenly made itself irretrievably felt. Father Michael would not be here this Sunday to say mass. They guessed they could go to St. Jude's, but Father Michael would not be there. And then -- he would never know which of the girls started it both were suddenly in tears

hugging each other. And holding each other in clumsy embrace. And comforting each other with small keening female sounds.

He felt utterly excluded.

The twins were watching television in the room at the other end of the house. Teddy Carella alone in the living room, waiting for her husband. He had called from the office to say he might be late, to worry about dinner, he'd catch a hamburger something. She wondered if he might be walking into danger again, there was so much danger there.

There was a time when the shield meant something.

You said, "Police," and you showed the shield and you became the shield, you were everything the shield represented, the force of law, the power of law, this was what the shield represented. The shield represented civilization. Civilization meant body of law that human beings had created themselves over centuries and centuries. To themselves against others, to protect themselves against themselves as well.

That's what the shield used to mean.

Law.

Civilization.

Nowadays, the shield meant nothing.

the law was overwritten with graffiti, scrawled in blood of cops. She felt like calling the President the telephone and telling him that they weren't about to invade us tomorrow. Tell him

enemy was already here, and it wasn't the Russians.

The enemy was here feeding dope to our kids and killing cops in the streets.

"Hello, Mr. President?" she would say. "This is Teddy Carella. When you going to do something?"

If only she could speak.

But, of course, she couldn't.

So she sat waiting for Carella to come home, and when at last she saw the knob turning on the front door, she leaped to her feet and was there when the door opened, relief thrusting her into his arms and

almost knocking him off his feet.

They kissed.

Gently, lingeringly.

They had known each other such a long time.

She asked him if he'd like a drink... Fingers flashing in the sign language he knew so well... and he said he'd love a martini, and then went down the hall to say hello to the kids.

When he came back into the living room, she handed him the drink she mixed, and they went to sit on the sofa framed in the three arched windows at the far end of the room. The house was the sort Stephen King might have admired, a big Victorian white elephant in a section of Riverhead that had once boasted many similar houses, each on its own three or four acres of land, all dead and gone now, all gone. The Carella house was a reminder of an era long past, a more gracious, graceful time in America, the gabled white building with the wrought-iron fence all around it, a large tree-shaded corner plot, no longer all those acres, of course, those days of land and luxury were thing of the dim, distant past.

He sat drinking his gin martini.

She sat drinking an after-dinner cognac.

She asked him where he'd eaten putting snifter down for a moment so she could free use of her hands and he watched her r, fingers and answered in a combination of voice sign, said he'd gone to a little Chinese joint Culver, and then he fell silent, sipping at his his he bent. He looked so tired. She knew him well. She loved him so much.

He told her then how troubled he was by murder of the priest.

It wasn't that he was religious or anything..

"I mean, you know that, Teddy, I haven't inside a church since my si got married, I don't believe in any of that stuff anymore..."

... but somehow, the murder of a man of God..

"I don't.even believe in that, people themselves to religion, devoti their lives spreading religion, any religion, I just don't in any of that anymore, Teddy, I'm sorry. I you're religious. I know you pray. Forgive me. sorry."

She took his hands in her own.

"I wish I could pray," he said.

And was silent again.

And then said, "But I've seen too much."

She squeezed his hands.

"Teddy... this is really getting to me," he said.

She flashed the single word Why?

"Because... he was a priest."

She looked at him, puzzled.

"I know. That sounds contradictory. Why should the death of a priest bother me? I haven't even spoken to a priest since.., when did she g married?

Angela? When was her wedding?"

Teddy's fingers moved:

The day the twins were born.

"Almost eleven years ago," he said, and nodded.

"That's the last time I had anything to do with a priest. Eleven years ago."

He looked at his wife. A great many things had happened in those eleven years. Sometimes time seemed elastic to him, a concept that could be bent at will, twisted to fit ever-changing needs. Who was to say the twins were not now thirty years old, rather than eleven? Who was to say that he and Teddy were not still the young marrieds they'd been back then?

Time. A concept as confusing to Carella as was that of... well, God.

He shook his head.

"Leave God out of it," he said, almost as if he'd spoken his earlier thoughts aloud. "Forget that Father Michael was a man of God, whatever that

means. Maybe there are no men of God anymore.

Maybe the whole world..."

He shook his head again.

"Figure him only for someone who was.., okay, not pure, nobody's perfect but at least innocent."

He saw the puzzlement on her face, and realized she had misread either his lips or his sloppy signing.

He signed the word letter by letter, and she nodded and signed it back and he said, "Yeah, think of him that way. Innocent. And, yes, pure, not? Pure of heart, anyway. A man who'd never harmed human being in his entire life. Would never have dreamed of harming anyone. And all at once, out the night, out of the sunset, into his peaceful grave there comes an assassin with a knife."

He drained his glass.

"That's what's getting to me, Teddy. On Year's Eve, I caught a baby smothered in her crib that was only five months ago, what's today, twenty-sixth of May, not even five full And now another innocent. If people like.., like... people like that are getting killed.., if the same if the.., if nobody gives a damn anymore.., if you kill a baby, kill a priest, kill a ninety-year-old grandmother, kill a pregnant woman..."

And suddenly he buried his face in his hands.

"There's too much of it," he said.

And she realized he was weeping.

"Too much," he said.

She took him in her arms.

And she thought Dear God, get him out of this job before it kills hi

Seronia and her brother were eating pizza in a joint on The Stem. Th had ordered and devoured one large pizza with extra cheese and pepperoni, and were now working on the smaller pizza they'd ordered next. Seronia was leaning forward over the table, a long string of mozzarella cheese trailing from her lips to the folded wedge of pizz her hand, eating her way up the string toward the slice of pizza. Ho watched her as if she were walking a tightrope a hundred feet above ground.

She bit off the cheese together with a piece of the pizza, chewed, swallowed and washed it down with Diet Coke. She was very much aware that the white guy throwing pizzas behind the counter was watching h She was wearing an exceptionally short mini made to look like black leather. Red silk blouse with a scoop neck. Dangling red earrings.

Black patent pumps. Thirteen years old and being eyed up and down by white man shoveling pizza in an oven.

. "You shoonta lied to him," she told her brother.

"He fine out why you was on. "Leventh Street, he be back."

"You the one say they was nothin' to lose," I-looper said.

"That dinn give you no cause to lie."

"I tole him basely d'troof," Hooper said.

"No, you lied about Fat Harol'."

"So whut? Who gives a shit about that skinny li'l fuck?"

"Sayin' as how he do crack. Sheee-
it, man, he a momma's boy doan know
crack fum his own crack."

Hooper laughed.

"Sayin' as how he wenn to a crack house, bought hissself a nickel via

An' paintin' yourself like a..."

"It was true we wenn t'church t'gether, though, me an' Harol"" Hooper said.

"I doan do no dope," Seronia said, imitating brother talking to Care "an' I doan run dope none a'these mis'able dealers comes aroun' tryi a'spoil d'chirren."

"This was the Man we talkin' to," Hooper "Whutchoo 'spec me to tell him?"

"I never done no crim'nal thing in my Seronia said, still doing a pr fair imitation of he . brother's deeper voice. "Never!" she said, an clenched her fist and rapped it against her sin budding breast.

"Is 'zackly whut I tole the Man," Hooper said, grinned.

"I like to wet my pants when I heerd that, Seronia said, and shook h head in admiration pride. "I goan be any kine a'nigger, it's goan be good one," she mimicked. "Like Eddie Murphy."

And again shook her head and rolled her big brown eyes heavenward.

"Eddie Murphy, right," Hooper said.

"You goan wish you was Eddie Murphy when he comes roun' again," Sero said. "'Cause he look to me like the kine a'fuzz doan let go, bro. A he goan talk to the people 'long. "Leventh Street, an' somebody gonn tell him sumpin' you dinn tell him.

An' then he goan fine out whut happen 'tween you an' the pries" an' then you goan be in deep shit, bro."

"Am' nothin' happen 'tween me an' the pries'."

"'Sep' you hid yo' stash in the church," Seronia said, and bit into another slice of pizza.

Willis did not get back to the house on Lane until almost eight o'cl that Saturday He called her name the moment he stepped into entry fo

There was no answer.

"Honey?" he called. "I'm home."

And again there was no answer. He was policeman, trained to expect t unexpected.

was, moreover, a policeman who had lived onmth thin edge of anticipa

from the moment he'

committed himself to Marilyn Hollis. The wor he'd heard on the telep
this past Thursday nigl!

suddenly popped into his mind Perd6neme, sen

- and just as suddenly he was alarmed.

"Marilyn!" he shouted, and went tearing up t.l'm. stairs two at a ti
made a sharp right turn on t landing and was starting up the stepsi:

second-floor the third floor when he heard her voice coming fro
somewhere down the corridor.

"In here, Hal."

She was in the kitchen. Sitting at the butcher block table, the
stainless steel ovens, refrigerator and range forming a grey metalli
curtain behind her.

She was holding a dish towel to her nose. The towel bulged with angl
There was an empty ice cube tray on the table.

"I fell," she said.

Hand holding the dish towel to her nose, eyes wide above it and flan
it, flesh under the eyes already discolored.

"Down the stairs," she said. "I think I broke my nose."

"Well, Jesus, did you call the... ?" "It just happened a few minutes
ago," she said.

I'll call him," he said, and went immediately to the phone.

"I don't think they can do anything for a broken nose," she said. "I
think it has to heal by itself."

"They can set it," he said, and began searching through their person
directory on the counter under the wall phone. Rubenstein, the docto
name was Rubenstein. Willis realized all at once that he was
irrationally irritated; the way a parent might become irritated when
child did something that threatened its own well-
being. He was relieved
that Marilyn had not hurt herself more badly, but annoyed that she h
hurt herself at all.

"How'd you manage to fall down the goddamn stairs?" he said, shaking
head.

"I tripped," she said.

"Isn't his number in this thing?" he asked impatiently.

"Try D," she said. "For doctor."

More annoyed now, he turned to the D section the directory, and scan through a dozen name: and numbers in Marilyn's handwriting before he found a listing for Rubenstein, Marvin, Dr. He dialed the number. It rang four times and then a woman picked up. The doctor's answering service. advised Willis that the doctor was out of town several days asked if she should notify hi standby, a Dr. Gerald Peters. Somewhat curtly Willis said, "Never mind," and hung the phone back on the wall cradle.

"Come on," he said, "we're going to the hospital."

"I really don't think..." "Marilyn, please," he said.

He hurried her out of the house and into the He debated hitting the hammer, decided against Use the siren on a personal matter, the would take a fit. The nearest hospital Morehouse General on Culver and North Third, inside the precinct's western boundary. He there as if he were responding to a 1013, on the accelerator, ignoring traffic signals unless changing light posed a danger to another and then made a sharp right turn on Third, wheeled the car squealing up the driveway to the Emergency Room.

This was Saturday night.

Only eighteen minutes past eight, in fact, but the weekend had already begun in earnest, and the E.R. resembled an army field station. Two black cops with identifying 87 insignia on their uniform collars were struggling to keep apart a pair of lookalike white goons who had done very good job of cutting each other to ribbons. Their T-shirts, once white, now clung in tatters to bloody streamers of flesh.

One of the men had opened the other's face from his right temple down his jaw. The other man had slashed through the first guy's bulging biceps and forearm all the way down to the wrist. The men were still screaming at each other, their hands cuffed behind their backs, shoulder-butting the cops trying to keep them separated.

A resident physician who looked Indian and undoubtedly was in this corner there were more Indian interns than in the entire state of Rajasthan kept saying over and over again, quite patiently, "Do you wish medical treatment, or do you wish to behave foolishly?" The two goons ignore this running commentary because they had already • behaved foolishly

had probably been behaving foolishly all their lives, and weren't able to stop behaving foolishly now, just because a foreigner was sounding reasonable. So they kept bleeding all over the E.R. while the two sweating black cops struggled with a pair of enraged men twice their size and tried to keep their uniforms clean, and a saintly nurse patiently stood by with cotton swabs, a bottle of antiseptic, and a box of bandages and tried to keep her uniform clean, and an excitable orderly circled warily, trying to mop the goddamn floor as blood spattered everywhere on the air.

Elsewhere in the room, sitting on the bench, or crowding the nurse's station, or standing about in various stages of distress and discomfort Willis saw and registered with dismay:

A twelve-year-old Hispanic girl whose uniform was torn open to reveal a training bra and budding breasts. Blood was streaming down inside of her right leg. Willis figured she'd raped.

A forty-year-old white man being supported

by yet another police officer and yet another resident, who were maneuvering him toward one of the cubicles so that the doctor could examine him. Willis looked at the wound on the man's left shoulder, which looked to Willis like a gunshot wound through the left shoulder.

A black teenager sitting on the bench with one high-topped sneaker off and in his hands. His right foot was swollen to the size of a melon. Willis figured him for a non-crime victim, but in this precinct you never could tell.

There were also... There was Marilyn, period.

"Excuse me, doctor," Willis said,

the red-headed resident standing at the nurse's station studying a chart glanced up as though wondering who had had the unspeakable audacity to raise his voice here in the temple. On his face, there was the haughty, scornful, one-eyebrow-raised look of a person who knew without question that his calling was godly. It was a look that managed to mingle distaste with dismissal, as though its wearer had already singled out the offender and was now ready to punish whoever had dared fart in his immediate presence.

But Willis's woman had a broken nose.

Unintimidated, he flashed the tin, announced his own godly calling "Detective Harold Willis" and then slapped the leather case shut as though he were throwing down a glove. "I'm investigating a homicide,

this woman needs immediate medical attention."

What a homicide had to do with this woman's broken nose in a single glance, he was able to make this diagnosis the red-headed resident couldn't possibly imagine. But the look on the detective's face said that the matter was extremely urgent, the matter was in fact positive critical, and there would be hell to pay if this woman's broken nose resulted in a bungled homicide investigation.

So the resident ignored all the other people clamoring for attention that Saturday night • purgatory and immediately tended to the blonde Woman's needs, determining (as he'd known at anyway) that the nose was in fact broken, and giving her an immediate shot for the pain, and then setting the nose, and dressing it with plaster (such a beautiful face too) and writing a prescription for a pain-killer should she have difficulty getting through the night. Only then did he ask her how it had happened, and Marilyn told him unhesitatingly that she'd tripped fallen down a flight of stairs.

This was when Willis fully realized something he had only partially known from the moment he'd found her in the kitchen with the ice pack on her nose.

Marilyn was lying.

"But why did you lie to them?" Sally Fames asked.

This was eight-thirty P.M. The two of them sitting on the little balcony outside their living room looking out at the lights of the Saturday night and the splendor of the sky overhead. Sunset stained the western horizon an hour and a half. They had eaten an early dinner and then had their coffee out here onto the balcony, the brilliant show of color had been their treat these past several weeks. Tonight's had not been all disappointing, a kaleidoscope display of reds and oranges and purples and blues culminating in a dazzle of stars across an intensely black sky.

"I didn't lie," he said.

"I would say that allowing them to think you the priest had settled your differences..."

"Which we did," Farnes said.

Sally rolled her eyes heavenward.

She was a big woman with brown hair, full-breasted and wide across the hips, a woman who had ironically chosen to remain childless while equipped with a body seemingly designed for childbearing. In a nation

where being thin and staying young were the twin aspirations of every woman past the age of puberty, Sally Fames at the age of forty-three

thumbed her nose at all the models in Vogue and called herself voluptuous, even though she was really twenty pounds overweight according to all the charts.

She had always been a trifle overweight, even when she was a teenage but she'd never looked fat, she'd merely looked zaftig - a term she understood - even then to mean voluptuous because a Jewish boy who had become class valedictorian told her so while he was feeling her up in the back seat of his father's Oldsmobile. Actually, the boy had been thinking of the word wollfistig, which indeed did mean voluptuous, whereas zaftig merely meant juicy. In any case, Sally had looked both voluptuous and juicy, and pleasantly plump besides, with a glint in blue eyes that promised a sexiness wanton enough to arouse the desire of a great many pimply-faced young men.

She still looked supremely desirable. Even sitting alone here in the dark on her own balcony with her own husband, her legs were crossed in provocative manner, and the three top buttons of her blouse were undone. There was a thin sheen of perspiration over her upper lip. She was wondering if her husband had killed Father Michael.

"You know you had a fight with him," she said.

"No, no," he said.

"Yes, yes. You went there on Easter Sunday..."

"Yes, and we shook hands and made up."

"Arthur, that is not what you told me. You told me..."

"Never mind what I told you," Fames said. "We shook hands and made up what I'm telling you now." "Why are you lying?" she asked.

"Let me explain something to you," he said.

"Those detectives..."

"You shouldn't have lied to them. You shouldn't be lying to me now."

"If you don't mind," he said, "you asked me a question."

"All right," she said.

"Do you want an answer, or do you want to interrupt?" "I said all right."

"Those detectives came to see me because a was killed, do you unders that? A priest. Do know who runs the police department in this city?

"Who?"

"The Catholic Church. And if the church tells cops to find whoever killed that priest, the cops are going to find him."

"That still doesn't..." "That's right, interrupt again," Fames said.

In the light spilling onto the balcony from the living room inside, eyes met hers. There was something fierce and unyielding in those ey She could remember the last time she'd challenged him.

She wondered again if he'd killed Father Michael.

"Catching the real killer isn't important to them," he said. "The on thing that matters is catching a killer, any killer. They came to th store trying to make a big deal out of my differences with Father Michael. Was I supposed to tell them we'd had an argument on Easter Sunday? No way. We shook hands and made up."

"But that's not what you did."

"That is what we did. Period."

From the street far below, the sounds of traffic filtered up. Distan unreal somehow, the honking horns and ambulance sirens sounding like canned background sweetening for a daytime soap. They sat listening the murmur of the city. The wingtip lights of an airplane blinked ac the sky. She wondered if she should push this further. She did not w him to lose his temper. She knew what could happen if he lost his temper.

"You see," she said, as gently as she could, "I just think it was st to lie about something so insignificant."

"You must stop saying that, Sally. That I lied."

"Because certainly," she said, still gently, still calmly, "the poli weren't about to think that a silly argument..."

"But that's exactly what they were thinking."

That's exactly why they came to the store. Waving that damn letter I written! Finding something threatening in every paragraph! So what w supposed to say? What did you want me to say, Sally? That the letter only the beginning? That we had a violent argument shortly after I'd written it? Is that what you wanted me to say?"

"All I know is that policemen can tell when someone is lying."

"Nonsense."

"It's true. They have a sixth sense. And if think you were lying about Father Michael..."

let the sentence trail.

"Yes?" he said.

"Nothing."

"No, tell me. If they think I was lying about Father Michael, then what?"

"Then they may start looking for other things."

"What other things?"

"You know what things," she said.

Hawes was learning a few things about Krissie. He learned, to begin with, that she'd come to this from a little town in Minnesota...

"I love it here," she said. "Do you love it here?"

"Sometimes."

"Have you ever been to Minnesota?" "Never," he said.

"Cold," she said.

"I'll bet."

"Everybody runs inside during the winter. You can freeze to death out there in the snow and ice, you know. So they all run to the bunkers, lock up behind them and wait till springtime before they show their faces again. It's a sort of siege mentality."

It seemed odd to be talking about the dead of winter when everywhere around them springtime was very much in evidence. They had come out of the restaurant at a little after ten, and it was now almost ten-thirty

and they were walking idly up Hall Avenue toward the Tower Building Midway. On nights like tonight, it was impossible to believe that anyone ever got mugged in this city. Men and women strolled together hand in hand, glancing into brightly lighted store windows, buying pretzels, hot dogs or ice cream or yogurt or souvlaki or sausages from the bazars of peddlers' carts on almost every corner, browsing the several bookstores that would be open till midnight, checking out the sidewalk

wares of the nighttime street merchants, stopping to listen to a blatinor saxophonist playing a soulful rendition of Birth of the Blues, fat mellow notes floating out of the bell of his golden horn and soaring upward on the balmy air. It was a night for lovers.

They were not yet lovers, Hawes and Krissie, and perhaps they'd never be. But they were learning each other. This was the difficult time. You met someone, and you liked what you saw, and then you hoped that what you learned about him or her would make sense, would mysteriously jibe with whatever person you happened to be at this particular stage of life. The way Hawes figured it, everything on where you were and who you were at any time. If he'd met Krissie a year ago, he'd have too occupied with Annie Rawles to have and pursued any other relationship. Five or ten years ago, he found it difficult to which women had figured large in his life at given time. Once there had been another Krissie well, Christine, actually, close but not Christine Maxwell. Who'd owned that? Hadn't she? May was the month for forgetting.

"How'd you happen to start working uptown?" asked.

"There was an ad in the paper," she said. "I looking for something part time and the job at church sounded better than waitressing."

"Why part time?"

"Well, because I have classes, you know, and I have to make rounds..

Oh, Jesus, he thought, an actress.

"What kind of classes?" he asked hopefully.

"Acting, voice, dance..."

Of course, he thought.

"And I work out three times a week at the gym..."

Certainly, he thought.

"So the job at the church is just to keep me going, you know..."

"Uh-huh," he said out loud.

"Till I get a part in something..."

"Right, a part," he said.

Every actress he'd ever met in his life had been a totally egotistic thoroughly self-centered airhead looking for a part in something.

"Which is why I came here, of course," she said.

"I mean, we've got the Guthrie out there and all, but that's still regional theater, isn't it?"

"I guess you could call it that," Hawes said.

"Yes, well, it is, actually," Krissie said.

He had once dated an actress who was working in a little theater downtown in a musical revue called Goofballs written by a man who reviewed books while he was learning to become Stephen Sondheim.

If he reviewed books as well as he wrote musical revues, the writers the world were in serious trouble. The actress's name was Holly Tree and she SWORE this was her real name even though her driver's license (which Hawes big detective that he was - happened to peek at while she was still asleep naked in his apartment the morning after they'd met) read Marie Trenotte, which he later learned meant Three Nights, Trenotte not the Marie. Three nights was the exact amount of time she spent with him before moving on to bigger better things, like the reviewer who had the show.

He had known another actress who'd been with a heroin dealer he'd arrested this was cocaine and then crack became the drugs of and who told him she was up for the part of a cop on Hill Street and would have in mind very much she moved in with him while her man was away she could do some firsthand research, who she knew was dealing drugs anyway. Her Alyce (with a y) Chambers and she was a red-head who mentioned that if they had children their hair would be red since both parents had red hair, did he ever notice that a lot of actresses and especially strippers had who were cops? He had never noticed. She did get the part on Hill Street. Nor any other part ever tried out for, it was that son of a bitch in she informed Hawes, pulling strings from all the upstate. I all the while she lived with him, she once talked about anything but herself. He began: feel like a mirror.

Then one day she met a man with a Santa beard and twinkling blue eyes and a diamond ring the size of Antigua and he told her he was producing a little show out in Los Angeles and asked her to accompany him out there could with him temporarily at a little house he owned on the beach at Malibu... not the Colony, but close to it... just south of it, in fact.., closer to Santa Monica, in fact.., if that's what she would do. She moved out the very next day. She still sent Hawes a card every Christmas, but somehow she seemed to think his name was Corry Hawes.

And he'd known another actress who washed out her panties in... "Pen

for your thoughts," Krissie said.

"I was just thinking how nice, an actress," Hawes said.

"Actually," she said, "it's not very nice at all."

He braced himself for an Actress Atrocity Story.

Producer asking her to strip for a nude scene in a film that turns o
to be a porn flick. Actor soul-
kissing her while they're auditioning
together for a theaterful of potential back... "In fact," she said,
her voice caught, "I'm beginning to think I'm not so hot, you know w
I me an?"

He looked at her, surprised.

"No," he said. "What do you mean?"

"Not such a good actress, you know?" she said, and smiled somewhat
pallidly. "No talent, you know?"

He kept looking at her.

"But I don't want to spend the rest of the night talking about me,"
said, and took his hand. "Tell rne how you got into police work."

She had tried to get the blood stains out of the carpet, but Willis
a cop and he could spot a worked-over stain from a mile away. She
similarly tried to soak the blood out of th monogrammed hand towel f
the master bedroom, a much more difficult job in that it was white
whereas the carpet was a Persian with lots red in it. She'd used Clo
on the towel and had taken it downstairs to the washing machine the
kitchen on the second floor, thrown it in with lot of other towels,
the stain was still just visible, blood was tough. He'd known who'd
worked for days trying to get blood stains of a wooden knife handle
even the blade of hatchet, witness Lizzie Borden, whom he had known
personally. Blood was blood. Blood told.

And now, so did Marilyn.

It was five minutes past eleven, i Saturday night was still with the

Across town and downtown, Cotton Hawes w about to ask Krissie if she
care to stop by his for a nightcap.

Closer to home, at the Church of the Bomless on Ninth and North End,
Schuyler Lutherson fastening a black silk cord about the waist of bl
cotton robe, rehearsing aloud the words Introit which he would say a
the beginning of midnight mass.

She told Willis about the first approach the two men had made.

Ramon Castaneda and Carlos Ortega.

"They gave you their names?" he said.

"Not then," she said. "This afternoon." She told him everything that happened here in this bedroom this afternoon. Everything. He had fou the window they'd jimmied on the third floor, and now he listened intently, his heart beating wildly, she could have been killed. But he agreed with her, they could not kill her if they expected to get money from her, you can't collect from someone who's dead.

"Give them what they want," he said at once.

"Get rid of them."

"How?" she said.

"Sell the house, I don't care how. Get the money and give it to them send them back to Argentina."

"In a minute, right? Put a house worth seven-fifty on the market, and hope to sell it in a minute."

"Then borrow against it. Mortgage it to the hilt.

Liquidate whatever other assets you have, call your broker..."

"There isn't that much, Hal."

"You left Buenos Aires with two million dollars!"

"I put five hundred of that down on the house, and spent another thr hundred furnishing it. I made Some bad investments, a gold-mining operation in Papua New Guinea, an electronics firm in Dallas, some b loans to friends who never paid me back..."

"All right, how much can you raise?"

"If I sold off all the stock I have, let's say four, five hundred. P whatever I can get on a second mortgage. Unless somebody buys the ho tomorrow. Even so..." "Maybe they'll settle for that," Willis said.

"I don't think so."

"Because if not..."

She looked at him.

"I can't let anything happen to you," he said. love you too much."

The worshippers had been informed that the before tonight's mass would begin at and so they had begun assembling in the old church at twenty past the hour. It was written in sacred Black Book that all church business perforce be concluded before the hour of midnight when it was further ordained that the Introit be said and the mass begun. On most there was scant church business to discuss. Tonight there was the matter who, if anyone, in congregation had painted the sign of Baphomet the murdered priest's gate.

The assemblage numbered some fifty, people... If divisible by two, impure... among whom were the nine who would preside over and participate in the ritual of the mass... If divisible by three, sub-

The remaining forty-two were worshippers who had been told that the mass tonight would be more expressive of the joys of Satanism than had the more solemn Mass of the Expulsion earlier this week. But in contradiction to the announced purpose of the celebration tonight, their clothing they wore appeared conservative if not austere, the hues black or grey or dun for an overall appearance of unrelieved drabness, the angular and restrictive for an almost uniform look of severity.

It was only when one looked more closely... A man standing at the rear of the church seemed to be wearing a long leather blacksmith's apron over black leather trousers. But when he turned in profile to greet newcomer, it became evident that the trousers were in fact high boots and that between the tops of those boots and the hem of the apron there was naked flesh and nascent tumescence.

Through surprise, surprise.

A redheaded woman sat with her legs crossed on the aisle some three back from the altar, her auburn tresses caught and contained in a black snood that added to them the seeming weight of mourning. She was wearing as well a black silk, tailored grey slacks, and high-topped, laced, leather shoes. But when she uncrossed her legs to lean forward and whisper something to a man on the row ahead of her, it became apparent that the slacks were crotchless and that beneath them she wore nothing. The revealed patch of her fiery red pubic hair and lipstick-tinted nether lips were in direct contrast to the trapped hair on her head and the plainness of her unpainted mouth.

Throughout that vaulted holy place, then, were unexpected... Through ignorance, knowledge... glimpses of the flesh these celebrants wore

here tonight to honor. In Satan's name. they discreetly and posed ingenuously. Speaking whispers as befitted the sanctity of the Lord's meeting place, candid eyes met and held, neither roamed nor wavered, expressions never indicated that a promised later offering to Satan being shown in fleeting preview:

A woman's severe black gown, cut high on neck and low on the ankle with a cutout circle size of a quarter exposing the nipple of her left painted a red as deep as blood... A black man's grey homespun trowse with a long-sleeved black shirt and a han hood, his penis thrusting through an opening in trousers and held in an upright position by the white ribbons wrapped around it and tied about waist... An exquisite beautiful Chinese woman in a loosely crocheted black dress, pale diamond flesh showing everywhere except where tightly woven patches of black covered her Venus mound and breasts... Through concealment, revealme

In many respects, this socializing before the mass began was not too very different in tone or appearance from the little parties and gatherings occurring all over the city tonight. Except that here in group, among these people openly worshipping the Devil, there was in reverse order of their beliefs an honesty of intent that Schuyler Lutherson considered less hypocritical. Coming through the black curtains at the rear of the church now, he reflected solemnly upon the fervor of those who spoke most righteously for any God they claimed admire be it Jesus, Muhammed, Buddha or Zeus and wondered if these people might not find a better home here at the Church of the Bornle One. Because it seemed to him that those who most vehemently denounce the sinful actions of unbelievers were those who most vigorously and secretly pursued those actions. And those who defended their religion against the imagined onslaughts of infidels were those who, in the name of whichever god they professed to serve, most often vilified the sacred teachings of that god.

Come to Satan, Schuyler thought, and made the sign of the goat in greeting, and then went directly to the living altar and faced her, passed his tongue over the forefinger and middle finger of his left hand, the Devil's hand, wetting his fingers, and then ran both fingers slick and wet over the lips of Coral's vagina, from my lips to thy l and said in Latin, "By your leave, most beloved Lord, I beseech thee which was a plea upon Satan's own altar for the Unborn One to please remain patient yet a moment longer while this tiresome church business was attended to.

The worshippers fell silent as Schuyler stepped forward. Immediately behind him was the living altar, Coral, with her legs spread and bent the knees, bare feet flat on the velvet-covered arms at her sides, clutching in each hand phallic-shaped candelabra in which was as-yet-unlighted black candle. The beginning of mass would be signaled by the lighting of candles, followed by the recitation of first the then the Invocation. For now, the deacon sub-deacons stood ranked behind the altar readiness.

The four acolytes (four tonight rather than customary two, in that there was a special following the high holy Feast of the Expiation stood serious and solemnly in boy-girl pairs either side of the altar. Two eight-year-old girls, of whom was tall for her age, a boy who was eight, and another who was nine, all of barefooted and wearing silken black tunics which they wore naked. Coral's long blonde cascaded over the pointed end of the trapezoid, almost touching the cold stone floor.

Without preamble, Schuyler said, "The death of this priest is troublesome. It may bring unwanted, unneeded visitors to the church. It may lead to suspicion of our order, and possible harassment, see, from the police. Or perhaps even more serious measures from them, I don't know, I don't care.

What I'm asking tonight is for anyone here among us, if he or she is responsible for painting an inverted pentagram on the gate of St. Catherine's church, to come up here and say you did it. If you did it then you know who you are, and I want you to come forward and explain why you did it. So we can straighten this out."

There was silence out there in the congregation.

Hesitation.

And then a blond giant of a man rose and stepped out into the aisle. He was in his early twenties, weathered and suntanned and muscular and

lean, wearing a pair of faded grey jeans and a T-shirt tie-dyed in varying swirls of black, black headband and black leather sandals. I further keeping with the tone and stated purpose of the mass tonight black leather thong was tied tightly around his left thigh some three inches below his crotch. No one so much as glanced at the thong, no seemed to notice that it held fastened against the man's leg... Through bondage, freedom... ... a penis enormous by any standards, course by fabric of his jeans... Through disguise, discovery...

... but clearly discernible in massive outline.

"I did it," he said. "I painted the priest's "Come on up," Schuyler in a furtive manner, but he was scowling. Perhaps because, himself was both and considerably handsome so was the young man, and he may have felt constituted a threat to his leadership. Or sensed, even before the young man reached the door of the church, and even though he'd only heard speak eight short words, that here in the the Bornless One was yet another Mend, too damn many of whom had been to the services here in recent weeks.

"Tell us your name," Schuyler said, pleasantly. But something seemed coiled within "Andrew Hobbs," the young man said. "I coming here in March."

Something Southern in his speech. The lilt. intonation. Something else as well. A more lilt.

"Jeremy Sachs introduced me here."

Sachs. Jeremy Sachs. Schuyler's memory for an image to connect with face. A character trait. A verbal tic. Nothing "Yes?" he said.

"Yes."

"And the gate?"

"I did it," he said.

Through confession, condemnation.

"Why?"

"Because of her."

"Who?"

Was it possible, then, that he was not one of Dorothy's friends? And the look of him, and the cleverness of the thong, the understatement of it. But he hadn't yet said "her" name. And among those who roamed Oz, the female pronoun was often substituted for the... "Her," Hobbs said.

"My mother."

Ah, then. Were we still on the yellow brick road? . "What about her?" Schuyler asked.

They often nursed long-term grievances against "She went to him."

"Went to who?"

"The priest. And told him."

"Told him what?"

If only this wasn't so much like pulling teeth.

"That I've been coming here. That Jeremy took here. That we've been doing.., things here."

Jeremy. Sachs. And now the name took on visual sions, Jeremy Sachs, squat, rather looking young white homosexual'm without one of Dorothy friends, a longtime traveler the Munchkins'm who'd declared fealty t Devil by reversing his own natural preferences going down helter-skelter and willy-nilly on every naked snatch offered to Satan within the: sacrosanct walls.

Schuyler could not recall seeing his young friend at any of the mass before tonight, but there was wholesale confusion and resulta obscur In any case, here he was now, the friend of a friend of Dorothy, per himself, who had just now confessed defiling dead priest's gate beca of his goddamn All mothers should be forced to suck a horse's Schuyl thought. Including my own.

"But why did you paint the gate?" he asked.

"As a statement," Hobbs said.

Schuyler nodded. So what this was, it was a case of someone telling Mama to keep out life. Completely understandable. This was someone w any hard feelings for the priest. bad intentions here at all. Just somebody makin personal family statement. But nonetheless... "The statement you have to make now," said, "is to the police. To let the know you paint that pentagram as any kind of warning anything. This priest was killed, see, and we want his murder connected to this chu in any So what I suggest you do is leave here right minute, see, and home and change clothes..."

"What's wrong with my clothes?" Hobbs

"Nothing," Schuyler said. "In fact, what wearing is well-suited..."

He didn't know he was making a pun.

"... to the ceremony tonight. But it might be misunderstood by the police, see, so go put on something that'll make 'em think you work bank." "I do work in a bank," Hobbs said.

There was laughter in the assemblage. Laughter of relief, perhaps. T wasn't going to be as bad as it had appeared at first. Young homosex here had argued with his mother, had gone off in a snit, and in defi had painted the sign of his religious belief on the enemy's gate. He explain all this to the police and they'd understand, and send him o his way, and everyone could go right on practicing his chosen religi in freedom again, this was a wonderful country, the U.S. of A. It wa four minutes to midnight.

Hobbs asked where the nearest police station was, and from where he standing behind the living altar, Stanley Garcia who had been there early yesterday morning gave him directions to the 87th Precinct. Ho asked if he could come back here for the mass after he'd talked to t police, but Schuyler pointed out that the doors would be locked at t stroke of midnight, which in fact was now only three minutes away, s perhaps Hobbs had better get moving. Hobbs appeared to be sulking as left the church. One of the worshippers closed and bolted the door behind him, and then dropped the heavy wooden crossbar into place, i effect double-locking the doors.

It was a minute to midnight.

The church was expectantly silent.

The red-head in the grey slacks sat with her knees pressed closely together, her head bent.

"It is the hour," Schuyler said, and signaled to hi sub-deacons to come forward and light the candles.

The sub-deacons tonight were two nineteen-y girls who looked like sisters but who weren't cousins. Both brunettes with brown eyes, the wearing the customary black robes of the naked beneath them, for it ritual that consecration of the altar by the minister, sub-deacons (traditionally female) would then turn and in sequence be consecrate the Solemnly and silently, the girls whose were Heather and Patrice to the altar, in reverence before her, and then parted, one to the l the other to the right, where Coral's clutched the thick phallic candelabra. sputtering, they lighted both black candles, and went be the altar to where Stanley Garcia with an oxidized and blackened bra censer in hand. The girls lighted the incense, and accepted the thuribles from Stanley. Swinging on the ends of their short black

chains, sweetened with incense first the altar and surrounding apsid chapters and then went up center aisle to spread the cloying scent t Ce entire church. They returned then to stand flanking theft deacon.

It was time for the Introit.

The word itself derived from the Middle English word for "entrance," from the Old French introit from the Latin introitus. It was pronoun not in the French manner but rather to rhyme with In-blaow - It," as many

in the congregation were fond of explaining. In Christian churches, introit was in fact an entrance, the begining as such of the proper, it consisted either of a psalm verse, an antiphon, or the Gloria Pat In the true church of the Devil, however, the introit was a short an personal opening dialogue intended as a despoliation of innocence an introduction to the Devil, who would be invoked more seriously later tonight. The ritual blasphemy that Schuyler and the four child acoly were about to perform was, in essence, a rude dismissal of Jesus and acknowledgment of Satan Daemon est Deus Inversus: The Devil is the c side of God.

Schuyler nodded to his deacon.

Stanley rang the heavy bell nine times, three times facing south and altar, and then kept turning counterclockwise to ring the bell twice each remaining cardinal point of the compass.

The air now purified, Schuyler went to stand in the open angle forme the naked legs of the altar.

Facing the assemblage, he lifted both arms, and a the sign of the go with the fingers of both hands. At this signal the four acolytes can face him, a boy and a girl on each side.

In Latin, Schuyler said, "In nomine magni dei nostri Satanass..."

In the name of our great god Satan... "... we stand before thy livin altar."

And in their piping voices, the acolytes responded in unison and in Latin, "We beseech assistance, oh Lord, save us from the wicked."

"To our Lord who created the earth and the heavens, the night and th day, the darkness and light," Schuyler intoned, "to our Infernal Lor causes us to exult..."

"Oh Lord, deliver us from unjustness," children chanted.

"Lord Satan, hearken to our voices," Schu' said. "Demonstrate to us terrible power..."

"And give to us of thy immeasurable largess."

"Dominus Infernus vobiscum," Schuyler "The Infernal Lord be with you
And the children responded, "Et tecum. And with you."

And the assemblage rose to its feet and s tumultuously and victoriou
"All hail Satan, hail Satan!"

Detective Meyer Meyer was in the sq only by trying up on chance to c
half reports that were already weeks late. when a blond young man
wearing a dark pencil-
stripe suit materialized on the other side of the
wooden rail divider to the squadroom.

"Excuse me," he said.

"Yes?" Meyer said, looking up from his typewriter.

"I'm looking for whoever's investigating the priest murder. Sergeant
downstairs told me there might be somebody in the squadroom."

"Not on the priest case," Meyer said, and thought Never turn away a
volunteer. "Come in, please," he said, "I'm Detective Meyer. Maybe I
help you."

Hobbs opened the gate and walked into the room.

Judging from the way he looked it over, he'd never before been insid
police station. He shook hands with Meyer, accepted the chair he
offered, introduced himself, and then said, "I'm the one who painted
that garden gate."

Which, as it turned out, was the opening gun in a salvo aimed at Hob
mother, who to hear him tell it -
- was the cause of all his miseries.
Not only was she responsible for his homosexuality... "I'm gay, you
know," he said.

"Wouldn't have guessed," Meyer said.

"Yes," he said, "Which of course is Abby's fault, dressing me up in
little girl's dresses and forcing me to wear my hair in a long blond
pageboy..."

At which point Meyer, while still wondering about the garden gate, w
treated to the recitation of a childhood atrocity story no more
horrifying than most atrocity stories he'd heard except that it had
resulted in what Hobbs described as a human being "not moving left,

moving right" a great homosexuals knew Sondheim Lyrics by heart.

Hobbs kept referring to his beloved mother "Abby," sarcastically spitting out the word as though they were great good buddies whereas he hadn't seen her since she'd moved to Calm's Point six ago, and neither knew nor cared to know her address or telephone number. It was clear that despised her and blamed her exclusively for current lifestyle, which incidentally included, worshipping the Devil. So, naturally, he an inverted pentagram on St. Catherine's gate.

"... to let her know I'd worship wherever I well please," he said. "had nothing to do with priest."

"Then why'd you pick his gate?" Meyer asked.

"To make a point," Hobbs said.

"What was the point?" Meyer asked. "I be missing it."

"The point was she went to this priest complained about me going to Bornless..."

"Bornless?"

"The Church of the Bornless One, when she no right to do so. And incidentally, he had no n either, preaching about our church to congregation. No one was telling his con.

which church they should go to. Nobody at Bomless was running around saying Jesus is a menace, which by the way, he is, but we keep that ourselves ."

"But Father Michael wasn't keeping his beliefs to himself, is that what you're saying?"

"Only in passing, don't get me wrong. I had nothing at all against Father Michael. Though I must tell you, after Abby went bleating to he gave a few hot little sermons denouncing the Devil-worshippers up the block.., well, four blocks away, actually, but close enough if you're wetting your pants worried that Satan's going to come burn down your shitty little church." "So what you did," Meyer said, "was paint the Devil's sign..."

"Yes."

"On the priest's garden gate..."

"Yes."

"But not as a warning to the priest."

"No."

"Then why?"

"To let Abby know she should keep her big mouth shut."

"I see. And now you want us to understand you didn't paint that gate malice."

"Correct. And I didn't kill that priest, either." "Who said you did?"

"Nobody."

"Then why are you here?"

"Because Schuyler doesn't want you guys harassing us over this thing thought it'd be good..."

"Schuyler?"

"Schuyler Lutherson, who runs Bornless." "I see," Meyer said. He was thinking he'd have tell either Carella or Hawes about this pleasant morning chat, because perhaps one or the other them might wish to as Schuyler Lutherson why was so worried about police harassment.

"Thanks for stopping by," he said. appreciate your candor."

Hobbs wondered if he meant it.

Sitting on the third row of benches, the redhead the grey tailored slacks watched the children as rushed to escort Stanley to the altar hurrying on each side of him as he approached with a cushioned on a black velvet pillow. Schu, grasped the sword by its silk-tasseled handle. red-head's legs parted slightly. The children back at the altar again. Schuyler raised the over his head, turned suddenly to point i hanging sign of Baphomet, and shouted in a hoarse with emotion, "Bornless One, I invoke "Thou who didst create the universe," assembl chanted.

"Thou who didst create the earth and heavens..."

"The darkness and the light..."

"Thou who didst create the seed and the fruit," Schuyler said, and o cue two of the acolytes the tall eight-year-old girl and the shorter

eight-year-old boy stepped forward and faced each other.

Holding the handle of the sword in one hand and the tip in the other Schuyler lowered it horizontally over their heads. The red-head in the tailored grey slacks leaned forward expectantly.

In a high piping voice, the little boy said, "Behold! My staff is erect!" and lifted his tunic to show his limp little penis.

And the little girl responded, "Behold! My fruit drips nectar!" and raised her tunic to show her small hairless pudendum.

"My poison shall erupt and engulf!" the little boy said.

"My venom shall enclose and erode!" the little girl said.

"My lust is insatiable!" the little boy said.

"My thirst is unquenchable!" the little girl said.

"Behold the children of Satan," Schuyler said .softly and reverentia

Symbolically, he gently touched the tip of the Sword first to the boy's genitals and then to the girl's.

He returned the sword to the pillow. Stanley carded it back to where two nineteen-year-old sub-deacons were waiting for him, the hems of their robes fastened above their waists, their hands resting on their naked flanks, palms turned outward toward the congregation.

The red-head on the third row placed her hands on her thighs and opened her legs a trifle wider.

Schuyler approached the altar.

"In thy name, oh Bornless One," he said, "I offer myself unto the altar of thy power and thy will."

He threw up his robe.

"Glory to God," he said, "may all hail Satan.

Glory to Satan," he said, "whom we love and cherish. All hail Satan, said, "we sing glory to thy name. All praise Satan," he said, "we sing honor to thy name. All bless Satan," he said, and positioned himself at the joining of the altar, "we adore thee, Great Lord, we thank thee, Infernal Lord, we cry unto thee, all hail Satan, all hail Satan, all hail Satan."

As he thrust himself onto and into the altar, gong sounded three times and the assembly chanted in unison and in Latin, "Ave Satanas, Satanas Ave Satanas."

The red-head on the third row spread her legs wide.

The mass was beginning in earnest.

7'

At eleven o'clock that Sunday morning, the twenty-seventh day of May, they buried Father Michael Birney in the Cemetery of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel, all the way uptown in Riverhead, where there was still a little ground left in which to put dead people. The priest who delivered the funeral oratory was a man named Father Frank Oriella, had been appointed by the archdiocese of Isola East as temporary pastor of St. Catherine's Roman Catholic Church. Among the mourners was Detective Steve Carella of the 87th Precinct. Father Oriella chose to read his elegy from the first letter of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

"The first man was of earth," he read, "formed from dust. The second from heaven. Earthly men are like the man of earth, heavenly men are like the man of heaven. Just as we resemble the man from earth..."

Carella studied the small group of assembled mourners.

Father Michael's sister, Irene Brogan-- who made the arduous trip from Japan via Los Angeles order to be here for the funeral today-- stood by graveside now, listening intently to Father Oriella's carefully chosen text. Martha Hennessy, the priest's housekeeper, had introduced her to Carella when he'd arrived. A petite woman with dark eyes, she told him she'd be happy to help with investigation in any way possible. Carella said he was eager to talk to her, and asked if he could have a moment of her time after the service.

"... to tell you a mystery. Not all of us shall fall asleep, but all of us are to be changed -- in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of last trumpet..."

The forecasters had promised continuing weather for the entire Memorial Day weekend. blazing sun shone down mercilessly on the black top of coffin poised above the dozen or more young people stood beside the grave, listening to Father Oriella. Carella recognized in the group of teenagers the two young girls he'd spoken to yesterday. They were dressed sedately today, not in black-- this was a different color in a young person

wardrobe

- dark shades of blue that seemed appropriate to day's burden. They stood side by side, the one the black hair (Gloria, was that her name?) and blonde girl, Alexis. Both girls were crying. For that matter so was the entire group of young people with them. He had been a well-loved man, this priest.

"... then will the saying of Scripture be fulfilled: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh, death, where is thy victory? Oh, death, where is thy sting?' The sting of death is sin, and sin gets its power from the law. But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Poking about the fringes of the crowd like scavenger birds were half a dozen reporters and their photographers, but there were no television crews in evidence, and this surprised Carella. The priest's story had received extensive coverage, especially on television, ever since it broke last Thursday. Carella was aware that this was already Sunday. The clock was ticking and the older a case got, the wider became the murderer's edge.

"Lord, hear our prayers," Father Oriella said. "By raising your Son from the dead, you have given us faith. Strengthen our hope that Michael, brother, will share in His resurrection."

Here in the sunshine, the assembled priests paid honor to one of their own, standing in solemn black at the edge of the grave, listening to Father Oriella's final words. High-ranking police officers were here, too, in blue and in braid, a show of color and support to let the citizens of this fair city know via the newspaper people that the police were still on the job, if only to weep huge crocodile tears at the graveside.

"Lord God, you are the glory of believers and the life of the just. Your Son redeemed us by dying and rising to life again. Our brother Michael was faithful and believed in our own resurrection. Give to the joys and blessings of the life to come. We thank you, oh Lord, amen." "Amen," the mourners murmured.

A hush fell over the grave site.

There must have been a signal, someone had pressed a button because the coffin on its strap, began lowering hydraulically, a photo op that could not and would not be missed by paparazzi, who moved forward as the coffin between heaven and earth, silhouetted against the piercing blue sky. Another sign perhaps, because the lift stopped, and the coffin suspended now some several inches below the lip of the grave, and Father Oriella said another almost a private communication between him and his slain brother in Christ, whispering, his moving, and then he made the sign of the cross over the grave and knelt to scoop up a handful of soil.

earth and sprinkled it onto the coffin gleaming in sunshine.

The mourners came now with baby roses distributed by the funeral home, came in a orchestrated effort to lend dignity to death, came staged solemn farewell, each passing this for the last time, pausing at the grave with its shiny black coffin waiting to descend, tossing the roses onto the coffin, the priests from churches all over the city, the brothers from Headquarters downtown, the priest's sister Irene Brogan, and so many forty parishioners from St. Catherine's, and the dozen or more teenagers from the church's Catholic Youth Organization, all filing past to toss their roses in farewell, and now the pair from yesterday, Gloria, Irene and Alexis.

And then it was over.

As they moved past the grave and away from it, starkly illuminated in clear sharp light the photographers must have loved, there was another unseen signal, and the hydraulic lift began humming again, and the coffin dropped slowly into the grave, deeper, deeper, until it was completely out of sight.

Two gravediggers freed the canvas straps from beneath the coffin. They were beginning to shovel earth onto the coffin and into the grave when Carella walked over to where Irene Brogan was standing with Father Oriella, telling him what a beautiful service it had been.

He stood by awkwardly.

At last, she turned from the priest who had replaced her brother, and said, "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. Please forgive me."

Tear-streaked face. Blue eyes shining with tears.

Close up, in this harsh light, she looked to be in her early forties woman who just missed being pretty, her separate parts somehow not adding up completely satisfying whole. They walked to where the funeral home limousines were waiting in line, shining in the sun. Standing beside the one of the closest limousine, Carella watched mourners moving past behind Irene, heading their cars or the closest public transport. Riverhead was a long way from home.

"Mrs., Brogan," he said, "I don't mean to intrude on your family privacy..."

She looked at him, puzzled.

"But in the course of the investigation..., early as a matter of fact I read a letter you wrote to brother. Which was when I started calling you in Diego." "I think I know the letter you mean," she said.

"The one referring to his letter of the twelfth."

"Yes."

"In which he told you... I'm just putting all together from what you wrote, Mrs. Brogan. But seemed he was deeply troubled about something was."

"What would that have been?"

Irene sighed heavily.

"My brother was wholly devoted to God," said.

"I've no doubt," Carella said.

And waited.

"But even Christ was sorely tempted in wilderness," she said.

And still Carella waited.

"Let's... can we get in the car?" she asked. He opened the back door of the limousine for her and then followed her into an interior as secluded as a confessional. The door closed behind him with a snug, solid click. And now, here in this dim and secret space with its tinted windows and its black leather seats, Irene Brogan seemed to find the privacy she needed to tell her brother's story. She described first the receipt of his letter... "It was postmarked the twelfth, but I didn't get it on the Coast till the following Thursday, the seventeenth. My husband and I were leaving for Japan that Saturday. He sells heavy machinery, this is a business trip, he's still there, in fact. I... I called my brother that Friday. And when... when he told me what was really troubling him... the letter... you see, the letter had only hinted at it... but when I called him that Friday..."

At first, he is reluctant to speak about it, The Priest.

He tells her it's nothing, really, he shouldn't have written the letter at all, everything's fine now, she must be very excited about the trip to Japan, hm?

But Irene knows him too well. She was thirteen when he was born, when she puts her at forty-five now, and she raised him almost as if he were her own child, her mother being a businesswoman who ran off to work every day and then complained of utter exhaustion all weekend long. She knows her brother all too well, and she knows he is hiding now, excited about his trip to Japan indeed; she accompanied her husband to Japan on every business trip he's made in the past six years! So she bides her time, and listens patiently to him telling about someone in the congregation who

umbrage over his sermons about the tithe... "He mentioned Arthur Farnham, did he?"

"I don't remember the man's name. But, yes, . was one of the things troubling him..."

... and someone's mother coming to seek and advice about her homosexual son's involvement with, of all things, devil worship., and about... "He began to rattle on by then," said, "do you know the way people sometimes when they're trying to avoid what's really there? I'm not saying these things weren't bothering him., the tithe., and the drugs... the ... "The what?" Carella said.

"Well... drugs, yes. My brother seemed to someone was using the church as a sort storehouse. For drugs. He tore the whole place one weekend looking for where they were but..."

"Are you saying illegal drugs? substances?"

"Well, yes, I'm sure that's what he meant."

"He found drugs inside the church?"

"Well, no, he didn't. But he certainly looked for them. At least, that's what he told me. As I said, he was starting to get a bit hysterical then. Because he was coming to what the real problem was, and it did have a damn thing to do with any of the little

things he was talking about. It had to do with..."

A woman.

Her brother is involved with a woman.

He does not tell Irene how this started or even how long it has been going on, but it is tormenting him that he has violated his vows of chastity and himself in a situation from which there is no honorable escape. He loves Jesus Christ and he loves this woman and the two are incompatible and irreconcilable. He mentions that he has considered suicide... "He told you this?"

".Yes. On the telephone."

"Had he considered a way of doing it?"

"What?"

"Did he tell you how he planned to kill himself?."

"Well, no. I mean, what difference would that make?" "A lot," Carella

said.

"It frightened me, I can tell you that," Irene said.

"I almost cancelled the trip. I thought I'd come east instead, be with my brother, see him through this..."

But he tells her that taking his own life would be even greater sin breaking his solemn vows.

swears to her and to the good Lord Jesus that he will not even think such thoughts again, swears on the telephone. At Irene's urging, he swears that he will tell this woman he cannot go! with a relationship is tearing him apart, continue deceiving God in this way, destroy, "dearest to him. He will once again renounce flesh, as he'd sworn to so long ago, and pray God's help in living forevermore a chaste spiritual life.

He promises this to his sister.

"And then.., when I got the call from Quentin... we'd just come upst from dinner. It was a lovely night there in Tokyo, the blossoms still bloom, the air so sweet.., and he told me my brother was dead. And.. and... first thing I thought was that he'd killed. He'd done it. He'd broken his promise to me."

The limo went still.

"But this is worse, isn't it?" Irene "Someone killing him that way."

Yes, Carella thought. This is worse.

Not to kill him, no. To talk to him. To ask him her. Because you can condemn a person first hearing his side of the story, isn't that true? You can't just begin hating a person until you prove sure that there's really a reason to hate him. This is a man of God, don't forget, this is not someone like you or me, this is a man dedicated his life to God. If he's going to break the rules that way, then he shouldn't be saying one thing and doing another thing. The rules should apply to everybody. That's the way rules work.

Everybody knows you have to stop when a traffic light turns red. If you don't stop when it's red, then nobody is obeying the rules, and there will be an accident, and someone might get killed. Of all people, he should be the one obeying rules, especially the promises he made to God. If you make a promise to God, you have to keep it or God will strike you dead. That's in the Bible, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Kissing her. But maybe there was some explanation. On the lips.

Maybe he had some explanation for why he was doing that. Maybe there

something in church custom or church law that you had to kiss a woman the lips in order to whatever. Bless her maybe.

Greet one another with a holy kiss, that's in the Bible. It was all right to kiss in Scriptures, it was common practice. The one I shall kiss is the man and he came up to Jesus at once and said Hail, Master and he kissed him. Or when he's sitting at table in the Pharisee's house and the sinner brings an alabaster flask of ointment and wets his feet with her tears and kisses his feet, this was Jesus getting his feet kissed.

It was common in the Bible, look at Solomon, O that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth for your love is better than wine, your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out, therefore maidens love you. So maybe there was an explanation, and if you go to a person and ask what the reason is, if there is a reason, then can you explain that he was only greeting with a holy kiss, you shouldn't judge a book by its ask and it shall be delivered unto you. Was intention. To ask. To inquire. To discover. To find out from his own lips that this kiss was not appeared to be, was not a man kissing a beautiful woman, in fact but was instead a holy priest, performing some kind of of do whatever was he was doing. A holy kiss, the Bible, there are holy kisses, what in the true, every word of it. Not to kill him, no. To tell him. To ask him about her. But how could he put his hands under her skirt, her pants down her ankles, this was not a holy kiss, this could have been a holy kiss, not with her blouse open her naked breasts showing, Oh, may you like clusters of the vine, and the scent of you like apples, and your kisses like the best wine goes down smoothly, gliding over lips and down smoothly, goes down no this was holy kiss it was not that no.

The call came at twenty minutes to one afternoon, not five minutes ago. Willis had gone for the Sunday papers. The moment she heard voice, Marilyn realized they'd been watching house, waiting for him to leave before they placed the call.

In Spanish, the voice said, "Good afternoon."

Buenas tardes.

She recognized the voice at once. The handsome one. The one she had

In Spanish, she answered, "I've been waiting for your call."

"Ah, did you know we would call?"

Politely. In Spanish. No sense playing games now. They knew who she was. If they were to do business, it would be simpler to do it in their native tongue. From now on, nothing but Spanish.

"Yes, in fact, I was hoping you'd call," she said.

"We have business to discuss."

"Ah."

A note of sarcastic skepticism in that single word.

The Spanish were wonderful at conveying shades of meaning by inflect of the voice alone.

"Yes. I want to pay you. But I'll need time."

"Time, yes."

"But I'm not sure I'll be able to raise the entire two million."

"Ah, what a pity."

"Because even if I sell everything I own..."

"Yes, that is surely what you must do." " . I'll still be short."

"Then perhaps you should sell yourself as well."

A smile in his voice. A nod to the former hooker.

Sell yourself as well. We understand you were good at selling yourse

"Look," she said, "I think I can raise million, but that's all. More less."

Mds o menos.

There was a silence on the line. Then:

"You owe us a great deal more than half a mi More or less."

"To begin with, I don't owe you or your big anything. If that money belongs to anyone, it to..."

"It belongs to whoever will kill you if you pay it."

"Let's talk straight here, please," she "You're not going to kill me

"You're mistaken."

"No, I'm not mistaken. You kill me, you don't any of the money. If I were you, I'd settle for the hun..." "If I were you," he said, slowl and silkenb would recognize that there are worse things being dead."

"Yes, I know that," she said.

"We thought you might know that."

"I do. But I've only got so many arms and legs., "Y to cara," he said
And paused meaningfully.

"Y tus pechos," he said.

And paused again.

"Y asi sucesivamente," he said.

i Her face... Her breasts ..

,. And so on.

The last three words, though spoken softly and :asually -- Y asi
sucesivamente implied unspeakable acts.

She was suddenly very frightened again.

"Look, you're right," she said, "it's true, I don't want anything to
happen to me. But..."

"Then you should learn not to cut people."

"If you're saying you're going to hurt me even if I do come up with
money..."

"I'm saying we'll surely hurt you if you don't come up with the mone
Is what I'm saying."

"I understand that."

"I hope so."

"But what I'm saying is that it's impossible to come up with all of
money. Is what I'm saying."

"Then that's too bad."

"Look, wait a minute."

"I'm still here."

"How much time do I have here?"

"How much time do you need?"

"Even to raise the five hundred, I'd need a week, ten days."

"That is out of the question."

"Then how much time? Name a fucking amount of time I" "Ah," he said.

Chastisingly. Scolding her for the language used. Tsk, tsk, tsk.

She said nothing for several seconds. Re control. Calming herself. T she said, "I need, talk to people who can turn assets into money. take time. I have to know exactly how much have." "Wednesday," he said, as she had the he'd picked a deadline out of the air.

"I don't think I can manage that," she "That's not enough time."

"It will have to be enough time."

"I don't think you understand."

"We understand completely."

"No. Look, can you listen to me a Please? I want to pay you back, you understand that, I want this thing to be over and with. But..."

"So do we."

"But you can't show up on someone's and expect them to raise two million dollars in.

"You tell me," he said.

"How much time I'll need?"

"Yes. Tell me."

"You understand I can only raise half a would be impossible..."

"No, the full two million. How much time?"

"Say."

"Can I get back to you?"

"We'll call you. Tell us when."

"This is Sunday..."

"Yes, a day of rest."

Sarcasm in his voice, the son of a bitch.

I'll have to make some calls tomorrow, find out how long it'll take.

"Good. What time?"

"Can you call me at three-thirty? No later than that."

"Why? Will your boyfriend be coming home?"

"Three-thirty," she said. "Please. But, you know, I really think you should prepare yourself for..."

And hesitated.

Silence.

He was waiting.

The silence lengthened.

"Because you know... I really meant it when I said..."

And again she hesitated.

Because she knew what he would say if she told him again that it was impossible to raise much more than half a million. He would threaten with punishment, raise fears of acid or steel, promise her mutilation. But the facts had to be stated.

"Listen," she said, "I'm being completely honest with you. I don't want to get hurt, but there's no way I can possibly raise more than half a million. Well, maybe a little more, I'm being honest with you, I hope you realize that, but two million is absolutely out of the question, just can't do it, there I can turn half a million into two million overnight. There was another long silence.

And then he surprised her.

He did not threaten her again.

Instead, he offered a solution.

"There is a way," he said.

"No there "

" " "La St, he said. cocaine."

And hung up.

Carella did not get back to the squadroom until almost two that Sunday afternoon, after extracting from Irene Brogan a promise that she would call the housekeeper in San Diego as soon as she returned from the hotel. He had previously asked her if she still had her brother's May twelfth letter. Irene said she thought it might be somewhere on her desk. The next day to the housekeeper was to ask her to look for that letter. If she found it, she was to FedEx it to Carell at once. Irene seemed to understand why he wanted to read the letter himself: a fresh eye, an emotionless involvement, a mind trained to search for nuance of meaning. But she assured him once again that his brother neither in his letter nor when she'd spoken to him on the telephone had revealed the name of the woman whom he was involved.

Meyer's note was waiting on Carella's desk.

It was typed on a D.D. form, but it was really a memo and not a report such. Informal and direct, it detailed Andrew Hobbs's visit to the squadroom late last night (early this morning, to confess that he'd painted the pentagram on the church gate and to explain that "it was not the devil, which made him do it, but his mother Abby."

Meyer's words. Touch of humor here at the old .even. The report ended with the suggestion that either Carella or Hawes talk to Schuyler Lutherson at the Church of the Bornless One.

Carella carried the memo to the filing cabinet, found the file for the Bimey case, and dropped it into the manila folder. He remembered again that this Sunday. Even the hottest of cases got cold after few days without a lead. This case had been cold from the beginning. Nothing solid to pursue until this morning, when suddenly there was a woman in the priest's life. Solid enough, Carella suspected. But cause for murder? In this precinct, where looking cock-eyed at another man's wife could result in a pair of broken legs, a priest fucking around could very well provoke murder, yes. Perhaps even those words a priest fucking around could incite riot.

He suspected that back in the good old days when jolly friars were tossing up the skirts of giggling peasant girls and tickling their fancies on haystacks religion wasn't taken quite as seriously as it today. Perhaps something had been lost over the centuries. Maybe priests weren't supposed to be gods, maybe only God was supposed to be God. Didn't God ever smile? Wouldn't perhaps find it comical that in a place only blocks from a congregation that openly worshipped the Devil, one of His faithful servants was you find another way to describe it, Carella thought. To me, he was fucking around.

He suddenly realized that Father indiscretion which was perhaps a bit of putting it made him enormously angry.

Cherchez la femme, he thought.

But first let's go find Bobby Corrente and ask what he knows about the events that took place on Easter Sunday.

Bobby Corrente was an even six feet tall and weighed at least a hundred and ninety pounds, but of it lean, hard muscle. He had sand-colored and hazel-colored eyes, and he bore no resemblance to his father than a beanpole did to a hydrant. Carella figured his mother must have a princess. All clean good looks and charm, he rose from the stoop where sitting with two girls who appeared to be a year younger than he was fifteen, sixteen, in there.

"Nice to meet you, Detective Carella," he said and extended his hand.

They shook hands. The girls seemed more in awe of Bobby than they did of visiting. Open-mouthed, wide-eyed, they looked at

at this handsome young man who could talk so easily and naturally to a detective, even shake with him. When Bobby said, "Excuse us, won't you girls?" signaling that he wanted the girls to depart as gracefully as they could, Carella thought they would wet their pants in gratitude. Smiling, fumbling to their feet, bowing and scraping like hand servants in a movie about ancient China, they managed to back away without tripping all over themselves, and then hurried off up the street, glancing back frequently at the radiant boy-emperor who had granted an audience with the local constabulary. Bobby gave a sort of embarrassed shrug coupled with a boyish grin that said, "What're you gonna do when you're so handsome?" Carella nodded in sympathetic understanding, even though he'd never had such a problem.

"I'm glad I found you," he said. "Few things I'd like to ask you about."

"Sure, anything," Bobby said.

"From what your father told me, Nathan Hooper was here trying to sell dope on Easter Sunday, is that right?"

"Mr. Crack," Bobby said, and nodded.

"That's his street name, huh?"

"That's what they call him at the school."

"Mr. Crack."

"Yeah, the kids at the elementary school. Which is why we didn't wait

him in the neighborhood. It's enough he's at the school, am I right? warned him, we told him stay away from the and stay away from where live. But he came anyway."

"Why do you suppose he did that?" Carella "I still can't figure it," Bobby said, shaking head. "I think he was just looking for trouble." "Tell me what happened," Carella said.

What happened was it's two-thirty, three in the afternoon on Easter Sunday, and all the and girls are hanging around outside where D Per lives. This is 275 North Eleventh, near Italian deli. It wasn't such good day, Easter, do remember? A lot of wind, very grey, in fact it it might snow. We'd all gone to church morning, well, the twelve o'clock mass, this was Easter, we went to St. Kate's where Michael later chased us away. But you can't find him, he didn't know what was happening. All there was a bunch of kids yelling and inside his church.

So we were, I don't know, showing off for girls, clowning around. I remember Allie was his imitation of what was supposed to be Bennett singing I Lost My Heart in San Francisco, but he sounded more like Jerry Lewis, did you hear Jerry Lewis sing? Man. Anyway, we making our own fun, you know what I mean? Because the weather was so terrible, and supposed to be spring, supposed to be sunshine Easter, you know? So we were making the best of it And all at once, there he was.

I couldn't believe my eyes.

None of us could.

I mean, here's Mr. Crack in person, who we told at least a hundred times to keep his shit out of our neighborhood and out of the elementary school, and he comes strutting up the street like he owns it. Man.

Allie stopped doing Tony Bennett, and all of us just sat there watching him come closer and closer. He wears his hair the way they're all wearing it now, shaved close all over and then what looks like an upside-down flowerpot on top. He's all dressed up, it's Easter Sunday. He's coming. We're all watching him do his shuffle up the street. Sitting there dumbfounded. Trying to figure out if he's crazy or what? He's got a big grin on his face. Big watermelon-eating grin. Here's Mr. Crack, boys and girls, here to dispense his goodies. Break out your five-dollar bills, here's the man's going to chase all your cares away.

Afternoon, ladies, he says, and nods to the girls.

As if he's Eddie Murphy, you know?

Instead of some nigger here to sell crack.

Boys, he says, how we doin'?

One of the guys, this is Jimmy Gottardi, he knew t-looper personally from when they were doing this Operation Clean-Up on Fifth. What it was, the neighborhood people were cleaning out this lot that was full of garbage and junk and whatnot. Jimmy and some of the other guys on the block, but who weren't there that Sunday, volunteered to go and lend hand. So you see right off it isn't true they say happened on Easter. mean, these w. white guys going over to a black neighborhood help clean up an empty lot. They weren't paid for it, they were doing it as a service. So whoever says this thing on Easter Sunday was racist is out his mind.

Anyway, Jimmy knew Hooper from the Clean-Up thing, so he says Hey, Nate

-
- His first name is Nathan, he calls himself Nate when ain't Mr. Crack. Hey, Nate, how you doing, and on, like he's giving him the benefit of the doubt, he giving him an opportunity to say he ain't here crack. Hooper stands there grinning, Jimmy Oh so-so, man, ever'thin' cool, man know how they go and Jimmy says What bring you here to Eleventh Street, Nate, and Hooper his eyes up the street, checking it out, you know, his eyes come back all serious and hard and no smile on his face anymore, and he says needin'?

What he means, of course, is does anybody some crack. Because if we it, he's here to it. He turns to one of the girls...

"This is only what you figured, right?" said. "That he meant he was selling crack."

"Figured, what do you mean figured? He right out and said it."

"I thought he only asked if..."

"No, no, that was at first. But then he turned to one of the girls, he goes, "Honey? You lookin' for some choice crack?"

This is a fifteen-year-old girl he's talking to, Laurel Perucci, she lives in my building. Fifteen years old, I don't think she even know what crack is, he's asking her is she looking for some choice crack. Man. But we still didn't do anything, I mean it. He was here, he was selling dope, but nobody got excited, nobody flew off the handle. In fact, Jimmy who worked with him on the Clean-Up, looks at him and says Come on, Nate, this ain't that kind of neighborhood, something like that, letting him know this is where we live, we don't want no dope

here, okay, cool it. And Hooper goes Oh, that right, man?

This ain't that kind of neighborhood, that right? And he turns to La again and he goes, Honey, how you like some of this sweet stuff, huh baby? and he's holding the vial of crack like right where his cock is you understand what I'm saying? There's like a double meaning. He's spitting in our eye.

He's saying not only is he gonna sell crack here, he's also gonna insult, this innocent fifteen-year-old girl.

So it happened.

"What happened?" Carella asked.

"A fight started, what do you think happened?"

"Someone hit him with a baseball bat, isn't that right?"

"No, what baseball bat? There was no baseball bat. It was a fist fight. This was Easter Sunday, who was playing baseball? Where was a baseball bat gonna come from?"

"Hooper says he got hit with a ball bat."

"Hooper's a lying bastard." "He says he got chased up the street with baseball bats and garbage can lids."

"Sure. Because he was the one with the fuckin knife."

"He had a knife?"

"A switchblade knife. He pulled it the minute first punch was thrown"

"Who threw the first punch?" "Me. I admit it," Bobby said, and grinned

"And you say he pulled a knife?"

"First thing he did."

"Then what?"

"One of the guys hit him from behind, the back the head. And he must figured the knife going to help him here, he'd better get the hell out here fast. So he began running. And we ran n after him."

"To the church."

"Yeah, he ran inside St. Kate's. We chased inside, too. And then Fat Michael started we were hoodlums and all that, and get out of hit

church, and we tried to tell him this was crack-dealer here, he was trying to sell dope in neighborhood, he insulted one of our girls, he had knife, for Christ's sake... I admit I said that church, I admit took the name of the Lord in Father Michael had a fit. What? What do you say?

How dare you? Get out of here, this is God's house, all that. So we left. Some things you walk away from, you know what I mean? Some things are a no-win situation."

"Then what?"

"Then what what? We went home. That was it."

"Did you see anyone else in the church? While you were there?"

"No. Just Father Michael."

"Hear anyone else?"

"No."

"You didn't hear two people arguing?"

"No. What two people?"

"Is it true that you made a blood vow to get both Hooper and Father Michael? For what happened..."

"What are you talking about? What blood vow?"

"For what happened on Easter Sunday."

"I don't even know what a blood vow is. What's a blood vow?"

"You didn't swear to get them, is that right?"

"For what? Did Hooper come back to the neighbourhood since then? He didn't. Has he been hanging around the school peddling dope? He hasn't. So what's there to get him for? We got him good enough on Easter."

"And the priest? Father Michael?"

"He only did what he thought was right. He figured he was helping a innocent kid getting beat up by a gang of hoodlums. I'da done the same

thing, believe me. If I thought somebody was in the right? The very same thing. So why would we do anything against him? In fact, I've been there every Sunday since. The other guys, too. Church like a meeting place for us. We go to ten o'clock, mass every Sunday. We go to the C.Y.O. dance

Friday nights. We had nothing against F. Michael. In fact, he was li one of the guys what happened on Easter. This was a terrible that happened to him. A terrible thing."

"When you say he was like one of the guys..."

"He was always kidding around with us, know, telling jokes, asking u about our problems, real nice guy, I mean it, you sometimes forgot h priest. I still think he did what he did on because he misunderstood situation. He know the kind of person Hooper really is. In wouldn't surprised..."

Bobby stopped, shook his head.

"Yes, what?" Carella asked.

"I wouldn't be surprised if it turned out had something to do with h murder."

"Why do you say that?"

"A feeling, that's all."

"But what gives you that feeling?"

"I don't know. I just know that when a selling dope, anything can happen. Including somebody. That's all I know," Bobby said, nodded i utter certainty. "That's all I know."

Willis made the call from the squadroom at a little before three tha afternoon. With late afternoon sunlight streaming through the window he sat at his desk and direct-dialed first 0-1-1 and then 5-4-1, and

then the number listed in his international police directory. He wai The foreign ringing sounded somehow urgent. Across the room, Andy Pa was typing up a report, pecking at the keys with the forefingers of hands. The squadroom was otherwise empty. The phone kept ringing. He wondered what he could possibly say if the lieutenant asked why he'd called Buenos... "Central de Policfa," a woman's voice said.

"Hello," he said, "do you speak English?" "Perd6neme?"

"I'm calling from the United States," he said, careful not to say America, they were very touchy about that down there. "Los Estados Unidos," he said, "I'm a policeman, un policidt," trying his half-assed

Spanish, "un detective," giving it what he thought to be the proper Spanish pronunciation, day-tec-tee-vay, "is there anyone there who speaks English, please, pot favor?"

"Juss a mom'enn, please," the woman said.

He waited.

One moment, two moments, three moments, a full six American moments which probably added up to one Argentinian moment, and then a man's voice came on the line.

"Teniente Vidoz, how can I be of assi please?"

"My name is Harold Willis," Willis said, Detective/Third Grade with 87th Squad here..

t, senor?

"We're investigating a case you might be able help us with."

"Oh?"

Warily.

There was not a cop in the world who wante, foreign investigation ad to his own already heavy case load. Foreign meant anything outside c own precinct. It could be the precinct ri next door, this was still foreign. Bahia Blanca, three hundred and more miles south of Buenos very definitely foreign. Rio Gallegos, all way down near Chile, was practically in a country. And the United States? All the way there? Don't even ask.

But here was a person who'd identified himself a third-grade detective, which Lieutenant assumed was some sort of inferior in the department and he was investigating a case, and needed help. Help. From the pol in Buenos Norteamericanos were a nervy bunch.

"What kind of help?" Vidoz asked, hoping voice conveyed the unmistak impression that desired not to help in any way, manner, or What he desired was to go to see his mistress he went home. It was already a quarter to six in Argentina. This was what he desired.

"I have two names," Willis said. "I was hoping you'd be able to run through for me."

"Run them through what?" Vidoz asked.

"Your computer. I think they may have criminal records. If so, perha you can fax me the..."

"What sort of case is this?" Vidoz asked.

"Homicide," Willis said at once.

The secret password.

Homicide.

No cop in the world wanted to be burdened with a foreign case, but neither would any cop in the world turn his back on a homicide. Willis knew this.

Vidoz knew it. Both cops sighed heavily. Willis in mock weariness of days and nights of working a murder he'd just invented, Vidoz because satisfying this request was a supreme pain in the ass but an obligation nonetheless.

"What are the names?" he said.

"Ramon Castaneda and Carlos Ortega," Willis said.

"Give me your fax number," Vidoz said.

Willis gave it to him.

The information from Buenos Aires came through on the fax at a little past seven that night, which made it a bit past eight down there in Argentina, where Lieutenant Francisco Ricardo Vidoz was feeding the photocopied records into the and cursing over having missed his even cita one Carla de Font-Alba. In the Clerical Office at 87th Precinct, Sergeant Alfred Benjamin Miller pulled the pages as they inched their way out of fax machine, remarked to his assistant Juan Portoles that the were in Spanish, and then that they were earmarked for "Det/3 Harl Wallace" who he guessed was Hal Willis. At the pages there were eight altogether Portoles whistled and said, "These are some hombres, Sarg

He was probably referring to several words that had caught his eye, words such as... Robo ... Asalto con Lesiones... Violación... ... and especially Homicidio.

The call from Kristin Lund came as something of a surprise that Monday morning. On her doorstep Saturday night, when she'd pointedly held out her hand for a goodnight handshake, Hawes figured that was the end of that. But here she was now, bubbly and bright, asking if he'd had luck yet.

"Well, no," he said.

"Because I'm cleaning out some things here at the church, and I thought since I'm in the neighborhood anyway..." "I'd love to," he said. "Should I pick you up there?"

"Why don't I come by the station house?" she said. "Maybe you can take

my fingerprints again."

"Maybe," he said, and wondered why the handshake Saturday night. Actresses, he thought, and shook his head.

"Half an hour okay?"

"Fine," he said.

"I wasn't even sure you'd be working today, said.

"How come?"

"Memorial Day."

"Oh. Yeah."

For cops, holidays came and went like any day.

"But I'm glad you are," she said. "See you And hung up.

He put up the receiver, and glanced at the It was now a quarter past eleven. He sat for seconds staring blankly at the sunshine through the grilled windows, still wondering.

A uniformed cop handed the Federal Ex envelope to Carella some ten minutes after left the office. He explained that it had been under some other shit on the muster desk and Sergeant Murchison had just now done. When he apologized for any delay this may have caused, he sounded slightly sarcastic.

The red-and-blue package contained the Father Michael had written to his sister twelfth of May. It was written on church St. Catherine's Roman Catholic Church raised black letters across the top of the address just below that. Father Michael had the letter by hand, but there was not in! handwriting to reveal the obvious emotional had caused him to open his heart to his older sister.

Instead, the hand was small and precise, the marching evenly across the page as if to the cadence of a secret drummer:

My dear sister, It's been a long time since you and I have talked meaningfully about anything, and I suppose much of this has to do with the disparate and distant lives we lead.

Whatever the cause, I strongly miss the intensely personal and private talks we used to have when I was growing up, and the good advice you gave on more than one occasion. Not the least of which, by the way, your advice to follow my heart about the call and to enter into the

service of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

I write this letter in the hope that I may still reveal to you my deepest feelings.

Irene, I'm very troubled.

I have for the past little while now, since shortly before Easter as matter of fact, been entertaining the most serious doubts about my ability to love God and to serve Him as devoutly as I've vowed to do now have reached the point where I feel incapable of facing a congregation on Sunday, of hearing confessions, of leading the young people in our youth organization, of counseling those in need of spiritual guidance in short, of fulfilling the duties and obligations of the priesthood.

My self-loathing reached its highest peak Easter Sunday, when I failed to extricate myself from a situation that had become all-. and debilitating I realized then that I caught in the Devil's own snare and had become a threat not only to myself and the lambs flock, but also to God.

I don't know what to do, Irene. Help Please.

Your loving brother, Michael Carella read the letter yet another time and he looked at the opening paragraph of Irene's letter to him:

My dearest brother, I am now in receipt of yours of May 12th, I cannot tell you with what a saddened haste to respond. Michael, how have you managed to construct such a tower of doubt for yourself?. And don't you know you should your fears to the bishop of your diocese? I don't know how to counsel or advise you.

This from a sister who, in the days of Birney's youth, had given him "good advice on more than one occasion." To Carella, her letter read brush-

off. Don't tell me your troubles, I'm on my way to Japan. I'll call you before I leave, we'll have a nice chat. By then, it'll be back to the skies again, anyway. Besides, I know you'll be able to pray your way to enlightenment and salvation. Poor tormented son of a bitch is having an affair with someone, as it later turns out, but she can't be bothered. Eyes all full of tears at the funeral yesterday. Carella shook his head.

And then he went to the Clerical Office, and made a copy of Father Michael's letter, and used a yellow highlighter to mark those words and sentences that he thought might prove helpful to the case:

I have for the past little while now, since shortly before Easter as matter of fact... The affair, then, had started "shortly before Easter

"Shortly" being a relative term, it could have begun two days before Easter or two weeks or even two months. In any case, he hadn't said a long time now." His exact words were

"For the past little while." Go pinpoint that.

My self-loathing reached its highest peak on Easter Sunday... Here w Easter Sunday again. The day Nathan Hooper had sought sanctuary in t church. The day he'd heard Father Michael arguing with an unseen man The day the priest had heatedly thrown Bobby Corrente and his friend

... when I failed to extricate myself situation that had become all-consuming debttitating.

Was he referring here to the argument he'd with this unseen, unknown man? Had they arguing about the affair... ... that had become all-consuming debilitating?

What had this man been telling him when Ht burst into the church, dripping blood and chased an angry mob?

I realized then that I was caught in the own snare... The Devil's ow snare, Carella thought, wondered what the priest had meant.

"What were you cleaning out at the Hawes asked.

"Oh, just some things in my desk. The who's replacing Father Michael bringing his secretary with him."

"Father Oriella? I thought he was temporary."

"Well, apparently not," Krissie said, and tossed hair the way actres did. Hawes guessed there acting classes where they taught you how to your hair. I'll be looking for something else ,w. Unless a part come along," she said, and ged.

On Saturday night, she had told him honestly and y that sometimes sh doubted a part would .ver come along. But apparently hope sprang Her was Monday, and she was singing the ;ss's same sad song again. A par will come And when it comes along, I'll be up for it. if I lose it, was because they were looking for who was taller. Or shorter. Or blonder. Or Actresses, he thought, and wondered what hell he was doi here.

They were eating in a new Italian restaurant on In this city restaur sprang up like s (or, in some cases, toadstools) and most new ones w Italian, the American craze for seemingly knowing no limits. Some of restaurants survived. Most of them went under after struggling for t or three months. Krissie had ordered the veal piccata. Hawes had ord the cannelloni. Judging from the taste of the sauce, he gave this jo

two or three weeks.

"Would it bother you if I talked about the case?" asked.

This morning, Carella had filled him in on what learned at the cemetery yesterday. The priest having an affair. Hawes had listened silently. guessed the news bothered him, but he didn't quite why.

"Go right ahead," Krissie said.

"I was wondering.., did Father Michael discuss personal matters with you?"

"Like what?"

"Well... personal matters."

"Like which dentist he should go to? Or whether or not he could afford a car?"

"No, I was thinking more of... doubts... "No. Never."

"Did you ever open his mail? Or answer telephone?"

"Yes, of course. All the time."

"Were there ever any letters or calls from.. hesitated and then thought Go ahead, bite the "Were there ever any letters or calls from w, "Yes of course," she said.

"Any women in particular?"

"I don't know what you mean," she said.

"Any women who wrote or called more than.., well.., might have seemed appropriate."

"I still don't know what you're saying." "Well..." he said, and hesitated. "We to believe that Father Michael may have involved in something he didn't know how to handle. Something that was causing him distress you know of anything like that, you'd be helping a lot by..

"No, I don't know of anything that was troubling "she said.

"Never mentioned any problems or..."

"Never," "And these women who called or wrote..."

"Different women. Women in the parish mostly," she said.

"Would you remember their names?"

"Not offhand. But any letters would be in the file..."

"Yes, I saw them."

"... and I kept a log of all telephone calls --

unless the new secretary's already thrown it out."

"Where would it have been?"

"On my desk. To the right of the phone."

"A book, a pad...?"

"One of those printed message pads. Pink. While You Were Out, and so
And then a space for the message and the caller's name and number."

"These women who called.., did any of them ever

visit Father Michael?"

"Visit him?"

"Yes. Come to the church. To see him. To talk to "There were women w
came to the office, yes," Krissie said, and looked at him. "You know
she said, "I get the feeling you're.., well.., never mind, I'm sure
wrong."

"Maybe you're right," he said. "What are you thinking?"

"That... well.., from the questions asking.., well, you seem to be
suggesting that Michael was.., well..."

" r ç,, eso "Do you think that might have been the "No."

"You sound very positive."

"I think Father Michael was wholly God and to the Catholic Church. I
doubt if he noticed women as such. Or thought of them way."

"In what way?"

"A sexual way. He was very good-
looking," know.., well, you saw him..."

Hawes had seen a corpse.

Someone repeatedly stabbed and slashed. "... all the little parish g

were crazy those classic black-Irish looks, that Gene smile..."

The body on the stone floor of the garden been smiling.

They had caught a homicide, period.

The victim was a white male in his early
dark hair, dark eyes.

Good-looking?

Hawes could not remember.

"... is what I'm saying. He was sensitive marvelously understanding, these are traits women naturally find appealing. But he was a you see And as such, he couldn't dwell on... • matters of the flesh. He could think of himself as being attractive to women. And he ..certainly couldn't allow himself to be attracted to thena."

"His sister thinks otherwise," Hawes said.

"Oh?" Krissie said.

"She seems positive her brother was having an affair with someone."

"Someone in the parish?"

"He didn't say, and she doesn't know."

"I'm surprised," Krissie said. "Really."

"You never saw any indication that he might have..."

"Not the slightest."

"Even though there were calls and letters..."

"Well, from men too."

"And visits..."

"Yes, from both men and women. St. Catherine's is a busy parish and was a responsive pastor. I remember how surprised I was when I first began working there, the number of people he found time to see. His energy was.., well.., amazing. I don't think the man ever slept, really."

"This was when?"

"When I started the job? The beginning of March, it was snowing I remember. I walked from the Subway stop to the church..."

... and had trouble finding the entrance. You Come in on the Culver Avenue side, you know, well, you've been there. The church is laid out like all churches are, with the central portal altar. The rectory St. Catherine's is on the west side of the church, you come through the arched door, and you go through the sacristy then into a wood-paneled

corridor and into rectory. Father Michael's office is in a corner on was a part of the kitchen. In fact, there used to be a wood-burning stove

where the filing cabinets now are, against the southern wall.

It's funny, but Krissie feels as if she's auditioning for a part.

Maybe because there's another girl in the when she arrives. You go to the theater to try something, there're always a hundred others there. In the theater, of course, you call anyone the age of thirty a girl, but the girl in Michael's office on that blustery March really is a girl, thirteen years old if that, jeans and a grey sweatshirt, and yellow rubber boots, her long dark hair spilling down over her as she leans over the desk. He is saying, "You put in the ticket price, Gloria," turns out discussing a big church dance that won't take till the beginning of June, and the beautiful little girl has designed the poster for it, and brought it for Father Michael to look at. "What do you think?" he says to Krissie, lifting the poster off the wall and showing it to her

She hasn't even told him who she is yet, said she's here about the part-

time secretarial job, but immediately he's getting her involved in church matters. She looks at the poster, which shows a lot of young girls and boys dancing, and features fat black music notes floating on the air over their heads, and balloon-type lettering that announces The June Hop, to take place at St. Michael's Hall on Friday night, the first of June. It's only the beginning of March, but Father Michael likes to get his young people involved long advance of any planned event. "So?" he says, at her... "He really did have a Gene Kelly smile..."

... and waits for her answer as if the entire future

the Catholic Church depends upon it. The little girl- she's not truly little, she is in fact five feet six tall, but to Krissie she's only a little girl, thirteen, whatever is also waiting for her decision, critics, critics everywhere. This is a first-night opening up here on North Eleventh Street, they're waiting for the reviewer from Channel 4 to express an opinion. Gloria, he'd called her Gloria, is a beautiful little girl, with a pale oval face and high bones, long black hair

falling clean and to her shoulders, lips slightly parted, electric eyes opened wide in anticipation.

Krissie feels a sudden empathy for the girl, who slyly drew the poster who is now yearning for the priest's approval, which may or may not hinge upon what Krissie has to say about her effort. Krissie knows what it is like to be however, and she also knows what a "sell" can mean to a saleswoman and so she expresses the fact that the poster really makes a person want to come here and dance, at which point Gloria "Yippee!" or something equally adolescent throws her arms around Krissie and gives her a big hug.

Krissie is here for a job, remember. And beginning to think this isn't such a dignified impression, a teenager jumping up and down in arms outstretched yelling when she hasn't even introduced herself. So she listens to Father Mi telling the girl that the poster is terrific except for the part where she forgot to put in, and the girl is excited by Krissie's rave review and the terrific Gene Kelly grin of approval and his Let's Put On A Little Contagion that she's wetting her pants there in the office. But scooping up the poster and thanks Krissie again leaves the office all adolescent happiness and the handsome young priest shakes his head she's gone and says something about the kids in this parish, and finally, Krissie introduces herself and to tell him she's here for a job. And do you know what he says?

"He says, 'Can you start today?' Just like Krissie said, and shook his head. 'I guess he's what happened there with Gloria, the way I myself saw Gloria who, by the way, is a president of the C.Y.O., bright as can be and beautiful besides.'" "I know," Hawes said, "Carella told me."

"The point is... well..., he was a fine, decent man, Look, I don't know about his sister, I can't say she's telling the truth or not. But if she's telling the truth he was..., involved with some woman... I mean, find that hard to believe? That he was having an affair with some woman... I mean, I guess she said they were sexually involved, didn't she?" "Yes, he told her he'd violated his vows of chastity."

"With some woman." "Yes. A woman he said he loved."

Krissie shook her head sadly.

"What a pity," she said. "That he couldn't work it out. If it was true that he loved this woman, and that he couldn't work it out." "Yes," Hawes said.

Memorial day.

Just what Marilyn needed.

A national holiday.

The banks closed, her stockbroker's office closed, and two hoods from

Argentina expecting answers at three-thirty this afternoon. She looked at her watch.

Five minutes past two. And ticking.

One of the men she'd known before she started Willis was an attorney named Charles Ingersol Endicott, Jr., a man in his late thirties carrying as a holdover from his prep school nickname "Chip". as if life did not have burdens. She dialed his number now and wasn't out on a boat for weekend; sailing Chip's passion. The phone rang four times, She was about to hang up when ... "Hello?" "Chip?" she said. "It's me. Marilyn."

She had not spoken to him in months wondered suddenly, and with an odd sense of whether he would even remember her. And voice boomed onto the line, deep and welcoming "Marilyn, my God, how are you and she visualized once the good friend whom she'd shared so many wonderful hours in the city where good friends and good men were "I'm fine, Chip, how are you, I hope interrupting anything," remembering his handsome face and intelligent brown eyes, a little thirty-one years older than she was, the father never known perhaps "Is something wrong?" he asked at once.

"No, no," she said, "I was just thinking about you and..."

She could not lie to him. He'd been too good a friend, and she hoped he was still a friend now. either way, she could not lie to someone who'd meant so much to her.

"I need advice," she said.

"Legal advice?"

"Not quite."

"Okay," he said, but now he sounded puzzled.

"Chip... what do you think I could get for a second mortgage on my house?"

"Why? What's the trouble?"

"No trouble. I need some money, is all."

"How much money?"

"A lot. I wouldn't be bothering you with this, but the banks are closing today, and this is somewhat urgent."

"You're alarming me, Marilyn."

"I don't mean to. I'm simply trying to get an estimate..."

"How much did the house cost?"

All business now.

"Seven-fifty."

"How much is the present mortgage?"

"Five hundred."

"You could expect something like a hundred and thirty-five thousand.

That would be about eighty percent of the value."

"How long would it take to get it?" she asked.

"Usually a full month. How soon do you need it?" "Yesterday," she said.

"Marilyn, I don't want to know what this is, truly.

But if you need money, you don't have to go to a bank. I can lend you however much you want."

"Thank you, Chip, but..."

"I'm serious."

"Have got two million bucks lying around you she asked, and thought it amazing that she could smile.

There was a silence on the line.

"What is it?" he said.

"An old debt came up."

"Gambling?"

"No."

"Then what?"

"A former time, a former life."

"Something you'd like to talk about?"

"No, Chip, I don't think so." "I can go to five hundred thousand," he said."

me back whenever you can."

"Chip..."

"No interest, no strings."

"I couldn't."

"You'll never know how much you meant to n he said. "Come to my offi tomorrow, I'll arranl transfer of funds."

"I can't, Chip. But thank you, anyway."

"If you change your mind..."

"I don't think I will."

"We were such good friends," he said sudde his voice catching.

"Yes," she said.

"I miss you, Marilyn." "I miss you, too," she said, and realized tha meant it.

"Marilyn, I'm serious," he said. "If you want call me. It's here. An am I. Call me, you? I'd like to talk to you every now and n. That's permitted, isn't it?"

"It is, Chip." "Good," he said. "Stay well, darling," and hung She lowered the receiver gently onto its cradle.

Her stockbroker was a man named Hadley Fields, there was no sense calling him at the office and she did not have his home number. She the file cabinets in the study on the second .oor of the house, and the file marked "TOCKS (she believed in generic labeling) she dug ou the most recent statements. A glance at the last in the Market Value column showed that as of the last quarterly statement on March 31, t assets her account totaled \$496,394. Of this total, \$443,036 was invested in equities, and the remainder was a cash equivalent of a b more than \$50,000 invested in what was called a short term income fu paying 8.6% interest. She began going down the list of stocks she ow

500 Abbott Laboratories, bought in June two years ago at \$45.125 per share for a total cost of \$22,793. Now worth \$54.75 per share or \$27 up almost \$5000...

300 Walt Disney Co, bought at \$57.00 a share in April two years ago, worth \$78.50 a share for a total increase of \$6,270... 500 Morton Thiokol Inc, bought in February of last year at \$40.625 per share, n

sellin \$44.375 for a total gain of \$1,657... There were losers, too:

1,000 Republic New York Corp purchase, \$46,058 a year and a half ago now worth \$44. for a loss of \$1,308... 500 Sprague Technologies Inc. Purchased \$7872, now worth \$5812 for a loss of a bit more \$2000...

... but overall, the investments she'd made coming to this city had increased in value by than \$60,000. Hadley Fields had been doing a j for her; she would not be selling at a loss. that it made any difference. The proceeds would be going to her. They would be going Argentina.

Tomorrow morning, she would call Hadley advise him to sell everythin she owned and to a wire transfer of the proceeds to her bank Meanwhi she had to place another call to Russell.

The man Willis spoke to at the Identification Secfi office that Memo Day afternoon was fluent/ Spanish, having been born of parents who'd their way to the city from Puerto Rico back in days when newcomers f that island were called Marine Tigers. This was because the ship thi carried them to mainland America was called Tiger, Harold. Sergeant Miguel Florentino was called Mike by the rest of the staff. He ,d Wi to call him Mike now. This was nice of in that sergeants in this cit outranked even detectives. Willis was but a mere third.

Morente looked over the records that had been by Vidoz, remarked as the one named os Ortega was perhaps the ugliest human being : 'd ever seen in his life (but perhaps it was a bad and then reeled off for Willis all the crimes a and Castaneda had committed in tandem over p twelve years. Willis, who'd already been .lied in by Portoles, liste politely but patiently. The list of crimes -
- Assault and Battery, Armed Robbery, Rape, Homicide and such

only raised his anxiety level. These were the people Marilyn was dea with. These were the ones who wanted money from her.

"What I'm really interested in, Mike," he said politely, "is whether not we've got anything on them here."

"In this city, do you mean?" "Or even in this country," Willis said.

"These are common names," Morente said. "In Spanish. Very common. Castaneda? Ortega? Very common. If you'd of given me something like Hoyas de Carranza, or Palomar de las Heras, or..."

"Yes, but these are their names," Willis said.

"Oh, sure. I'm only saying. The computer's gonna have a ball with th names. You're gonna have four thousand Ortegases the first time you wa

and see."

There were in fact only eighty-three lists Ortega, Carlos, in the citywide Felony file, and forty-seven for Castaneda, Ramon. With the records from Buenos Aires, Morente knew the birth dates of both men, also had information concerning height, color of hair, color of eyes, scars, tattoos and which he punched into the computer as amazingly the odds had to be what, ten to one? He came up with records for two men, Carlos Ortega who had been born on the day and who seemed to be just as ugly as the Ortega who'd presumably followed Marilyn in Argentina. There were no Ramon Castaneda's pedigrees matched the handsome one in the "You better call B.A., ask them to FedEx good set of prints," Morente said. "'Cause I'm right off, we're not gonna get a match fax, no way."

"Any other way we can zero in?"

"Well, unless you're looking in prisons, you count this one out," Morente said. "He's five-and-dime at Castleview."

"How about the other one?"

"Carlos Ortega," Morente read out loud computer screen, and then turned to the faxed and said, "Carlos Ortega," and then kept head from screen to paper, like a spectator at tennis match, comparing records, speaking the facts out loud, "forty-two years old, born October fifteenth," and said in an aside to Willis "Birth date of great men" but did not amplify, "six feet three inches tall, two hundred and sixty-five pounds, brown eyes, bald with black sideburns, this is some kind of miracle, broken nose, knife scar over the right eye, they sound like twins except your guy was born in Argentina and this guy in El Salvador."

"How do their prison records match?"

"The only time your guy was out of jail, this guy was in."

"So they could be one and the same."

"If you conveniently forget El Salvador."

"That could be a clerical error."

"Sure, anything could be a clerical error."

"How long has your guy been in America?"

Willis asked.

"Two years," Morente said, looking at the screen, and then turned to study the faxed record. "Just about when your guy got out of jail."

"Why was your guy put away?"

"Dope."

"Where is he now?"

"Out. Naturally."

"Anything in my guy's record about dope?"

"Nothing. But here's his whole family history.

His uncle was a pimp, a guy named Alberto Hidalgo, got him started picking pockets when he was still a little..." "A guy named what?" Willis said, and read for the fax.ii "Don't tear the fuckin' thing," Morente said "Where does it say that?"

"Right here. That's what this means in S Living Off the Proceeds. An take a look at He's dead."

"Ortega?"

"No, the uncle."

Willis caught his breath. "Hidalgo. Got killed a few years back. Cyanide."

"Do they.., do they know who did it?" asked.

"Doesn't say. This is Ortega's record, uncle's." "His uncle," Willis said softly.

"Yeah. Is exactly what I said."

Willis was silent for several moments.

said, "When did your guy get out of jail?"

"October."

"Then it's at least possible."

"That they're one and the same person? sure," Morente said. "But I wouldn't wanna bet farm on it."

"Have you got an address for him?" Willis a ***

It was the ugly one who called her at three-thir sharp.

Like the handsome one, he spoke only .1

ish. There was in his voice a scarcely contained he was forcing hims to be civilized. She w that he would never forget the humiliation sh caused him to suffer. She knew that once she over the money they wan he would seek revenge, he would kill her. She did not yet know quite she would deal with that. One step at a time, she told herself. But voice was chilling.

"Do you have the money yet?" he asked.

"I forgot that today was a holiday," she said.

"Everything's closed." "When will you have it?" he asked.

"I'm sure I can get the five hundred tomorrow," she said. "Then I'll have to see what..." "That is not two million," he said.

His voice was low. She felt he'd wanted to shout the words, but inst they came out softly, and were all the more terrifying: That is not million.

Almost a whisper. That is not two million.

"I realize that," she said. "But you know, you're the ones who sugge cocaine..."

"Ustedes fueron los que sugerieron la cocaina..."

St. "So I was wondering... I'm sure you have contacts..."

INO.

"Because it would be so much.simpler if I turned..."

"No."

"... over the five hundred..."

"No, that is not satisfactory."

"... and then you could handle the business of.

"No. Five hundred is not two million."

"Of course not. But I'm sure you understand..

Trying to appeal to his sense of fairness justice... "... how diffic

it is for a woman to handle a trans..."

"You should have thought of that before killed my uncle." "What?" she said.

"Nada," he said.

"No, what did you...?"

"When will you have the two million?" he had he said his uncle? Was that son of a uncle? Was that what this was all about? A family vend here? We'd like the two mill, sure, but there's also this matter of Uncle Famous Pimp Hidalgo.

"I'm still trying to make contact with she said, "I told you, this is holiday. But this is I'm suggesting. Once I set the deal up, why you your friend...?"

"Are you dense?"

The word in Spanish was pesada. "thickheaded" or "obstinate." Qupesa eres.

"We suggested cocaine as a way out of problem. But the problem is not ours. don't want to become involved in anything She almost burst laughing.

"Do you understand what I'm telling you?" he id.

She understood perfectly. He didn't want to run my risks. She was the debtor, let her come up with the scratch.

"What if five hundred is all I can raise?" she said.

"You said you've already made contact with..." "No, I said I'm trying to..."

"Then do what you have to do, and do it quickly!"

"I'm not in the habit of buying and selling dope.

"Miss?"

Only the single word.

Sehorita?

Loaded. About to explode.

"When will you have the money?"

Back to the point. No more bullshit. We're not interested in taking five hundred and investing it dope or in hogbellies. The only negoti aspect of this deal is time. When will you have the money?

"I don't know yet. If I can buy the stuff.., look, I simply don't kn I've been trying to reach this "When will you know?"

"That's just it. Until I..."

"When?"

"If you could let me have till the end of the Week..."

"No."

"Please. I'm trying to work this out, I really I could have till Friday..."

"Tomorrow."

"I can't promise anything by tomorr..."

"Then Wednesday."

"Can you make it Thursday?" she "Please?" Groveling to the son of a bitch. okay?" "No later," he said, and hung up.

Today, citizens all over America had lined sidewalks of cities and towns, large and small watched the parades honoring their dead in wa Today, veterans of all ages had about their infantry platoons or the squadrons or their minesweepers or their drops. This was Memorial Da day set pay tribute to the dead. A day, also, that si beginning of summer. The swimming pools outdoor tennis courts had been opened all America today, and all over America today promise of summer loomed large. For this twenty-eighth of May, and June was only four off and ready to bust out, summer was on the summer was in essence here this Day.

The town was full of tourists.

This was Memorial Day, this was the s, beginning of summer, this was time when "cans dredged up memories not of warfare and ,odshed, but summers past.., the summer of a kiss, the summer of a lost love, the summer all lights went out, the summer of distant music, the of girl yellow dresses, summer after urnmer floating past in hot recall, thi was orial Day. The tourists came to the city not to either dead sold or dead summers.

came to celebrate the start of a season of corn the cob and boiled lobsters, gin and tonic, beer with foam. Summertime. High cotton and 1-looking women.

Carella had read over his own reports on the Hooper and Corrente interviews, and there was no question but that the two were in absolute contradiction. It seemed to him that a third might be valuable, and had gone to the Hooper apartment specifically to talk to Seronia.

Her mother told him where he could find her. Her mother cleaned white people's houses and offices for a living. Got down on her hands and knees to scrub floors. Her daughter got down on her hands and knees to perform quite a different service.

Carella had not realized the girl was a hooker. That was the first shock.

"Arrest her," Mrs. Hooper told him. "Only way she can learn."

The second shock was actually seeing her.

He found her all the way downtown, standing under the marquee of a movie theater playing a pair of triple-X-rated porn flicks. She was wearing a purple satin mini and a lavender satin blouse. beads on her neck. Yellow flowers in her hair. High-heeled purple leather pumps to match the blouse. One hand on her hip, the other held a small purple leather purse. Lips pursed to air as strange men turned to look her over, words. She looked twenty-seven. She was "Want a date?" she asked Carella, and his air as he approached, and then recognized him started to turn away, and realized it was too late anyway, and stopped dead still, one hand "What's this?" she said.

"Few questions," he said.

"You can bust me?"

"Should I?"

"No crime to stand outside a movie show said.

"I agree," he said. "Can I buy you a coffee?" "I'd prefer some ice cream," she said.

They found an ice cream shop with tables in back. At the counter, fresh-faced black and red-and-blue uniforms served up sugar cones and earned seven bucks an hour. At a table near the window, Carella watched Hooper

eating a banana split with chocolate sauce, whipped cream, and a maraschino cherry, listened to her telling him that the girls behind counter were assholes.

"They cud make two hunn' id an hour," she said, was to get lucky."

He figured she was talking fifty dollars a trick.

"I want to know what happened on Easter Sunday," he said.

"Nate tole you whut happen," Seronia said.

"I want to hear what he told you."

"Same as he tole you."

"I don't think so."

"Look, man, whutchoo want fum me? Nate tole you the story, why'n't y go 'rest them cocksuckers busted his head?"

"Did your brother have a knife?"

"No. Who tole you he had a knife?"

"Did he go to Eleventh Street to sell crack?"

"Oh, man, doan make me laugh."

"Is his street name Mr. Crack?"

"Where you hear all this shit, man?"

"Somebody's lying, Seronia. Either your brother or a kid named Bobby Corrente, who..."

"Oh, that sum 'bitch."

"You know him?"

"I know him, all right. Was him swung the fust bat, you ass me." "Is that what your brother told you?"

"He tole me same as he tole you."

"He didn't tell me it was Bobby Corrente who Swung the first bat. Fr the way he told it, the boys who attacked him were strangers."

"Then they was."

"But you know Corrente, huh?"

Silence.

"Seronia? How come you know Corrente?"

"I seen him aroun' is all."

"Where?"

"Aroun' ."

"What are you hiding?"

"Nuthin'. You know Corren'ee, you go 'rest He the one broke Nate's head."

"How do you know that?"

"Jus' a guess is all."

"Is that what your brother told you? That swung the first bat?"

"You go ass Nate."

"I'm asking you."

"I got no more time to waste here," Seronia and wiped her mouth on t paper napkin and preparing to get up from the table when asked, "How you like to waste some uptown?"

He felt no guilt whatever throwing muscle thirteen-year-old hooker.

"Waiting for the wagon to take you to Booking," he said, nailing the point home.

"Oh whut charge?" Seronia asked, su confident. "Anyway, my man get m out in half hour."

"Good. Let's go then. I'm sure he'll love bail."

"You think you bluffin' me?"

"Nope, I think I'm running you in on a Two-Thirty."

"Nobody offered you no sexual conduct, man."

"That's your word against mine," he said, and stood up. "Let's go."

"Sit down," she said, "you makin' a fuss here."

"Are we gonna talk about Easter Sunday or not?"

"They both lyin"" she said.

This is not Rashomon not quite.

The movie Rashomon, as Carella remembers it, was not about people ly
It was about people sharing a single event but perceiving it separat
and differently, so that each time the event was related, it had cha
significantly. Listening to Seronia now, sitting with a
thirteen-year-
old hooker in an ice cream shop while she dug into her
second banana split, aware that men thirty and forty years older tha
she is are eyeing her through the plate-glass window fronting the
street, Carella begins wondering whether this version of the story,
Seronia's version as related to her by Nate shortly after the incide
occurred, is in fact the true version.

Or is she lying as well?

In the game of Murder, only the murderer is allowed to lie; all the
other players must tell the truth.

But this is not the game of Murder, this is the death -
of a human being
who also happened to be a priest, and it appears now as if everyone
lying, if only what happened on Easter Sunday. And yet, there are ar
where all three stories coinc" that it becomes increasingly more
difficult who exactly was lying ... or is lying about aspect of the
Eleventh Street happening.

Seronia admits, for example, that her bro street name is, in fact, M
Crack, and that been known to hang around the elementary on Ninth St
enticing the little kiddies to try of crack, a nickel a blow, this i
not big kids who are ten, eleven years old. In this perhaps in every
American city, kids are more often indulging in acts once exclusi
reserved for adults. Seronia tells Carella presumably her line of wo
makes her an the subject that in the past three years, sex committed
boys in the twelve-tc year-
old age bracket went up only percent, whereas
sex crimes committed by under the age of twelve increased by two
percent. Moreover, since the rapist usually someone weaker than he i
the female these new-
age sex criminals ranged in age years old to seven.
In fact, Seronia feels she is a public service by engaging in sex wi
rapists who might otherwise be chasing teeny girls in the park.

But that is neither here nor there.

The point is that her brother, yes, is a dealer, But this does not make him a bad person. him a businessman filling a need in the neighborhood as she businesswoman at thirteen, she thinks of herself as a woman, and why "considering her occupation - filling a similar need in a different possibly related community. All of this communicated to Carella in English that is not quite Black English, but neither is it the Queen's Own.

And on Easter Sunday, as happened on every Sunday, rain or shine, Christmas, Yom Kippur or Ramadan, Nathan Hooper goes uptown to Eleventh Street not to sell crack to the young wops gathered on their front stoops and freezing their asses off in their Easter finery, but instead to get crack from his supplier, young Bobby Corrente... "Are you making this up?" Carella asked.

"Do I sound like I'm makin' it up, man?"

She did not sound like she was making it up.

"Bobby discounts it 'cause of the volume," she said. "Figure..."

... you can buy a vial of crack for five bucks, but you've got to go hustling customers and that takes time and energy. Bobby sells it to Nate for four bucks a vial, but he does a hundred vials in a single day and goes home with four bills without having to run all over town. Nate makes a buck on each vial he sells, so on the initial investment of four, he comes away with an additional hundred, which is a twenty-five percent return on the dollar, much better than you can do on Wall Street.

On this particular Sunday in question, which happens to be Easter Sunday, Nate goes uptown with three big ones in his pocket plus another twenties, intending to buy his usual hundred crack from his usual dealer, Mr. Robert Vi Corrente, in case you didn't know his full name something happens that changes the complexion of the deal. What happens is that he hands over the money, and is reaching for the bag with the vials of crack in it, same way business each and every time

"And by the way, this won't be on the front broad daylight, with all these silly wop girls and watchin'. This is in the hallway."

where Nate is reaching for the plastic when Bobby tells him to disappear, vanish, get nigger, words to that effect. Nate knows what once, of course, but he pretends ignorance and Bobby spells it out for him. What it is (Oh, man, got to be kiddin' me, Nate goes) is that when Nate made his usual buy, he paid for it with funny money (No, you makin' a man, I mean it) and so this Sunday, Bobby is the four bills, but he ain't giving Nate no dope he's telling Nate instead to shove his butt his ass, he doesn't like doing business with somebody who

for merchandise with printed in the cellar.

Hey, no, man, come on, man, Nate is going, he knows Bobby's got him to rights, and figures this is the end of this relationship here, to look for a supplier somewhere else. But you buy dope without cash, a Bobby has the four in his pocket already, and the only thing faintly resembling convertible cash around here is the plastic bag full of crack. A hundred vials of it. So, since the relationship is over and done with, anyway, and since Nate is a very fast runner with a good sense of rhythm... "He grabs for the bag," Carella said.

"Is jus' whut he done," Seronia said.

... and starts running like hell, planning to get off I. Eleventh St and stay off it till things cool down.

Bobby Corrente wants to find him, let him come onto black turf, wher everybody got rhythm, man, and where your life ain't worth a nickel you start up with a brother. Which is just about when Bobby hits him the back of the head with a baseball bat.

The blow sends Nate flying forward, he almost loses his grip on the of crack, but he keeps running, knowing he ain't gonna make it back now, knowing he's bleeding too bad to make it back home, but not wan to quit now, not with these hundred vials of crack in his hands. And of a sudden he spots the church up ahead.

He tries the door, and it's unlocked. He runs into the church, and l the door behind him, twists this big brass key that's sticking out o the heavy lock, and he hears the wops outside, charging up the steps and he figures first thing he has to do is stash the dope because th dope is what this is all about, the reason he has a broken head is t dope. And they're pounding on the door with their bats, throwing themselves against the door, and they've even got something they're using battering ram, Nate doesn't know. All he that the door's going give, and he's got to hi dope.

And then he hears somebody arguing in the church, and he knows his t is he's got to hide that dope before whoever's comes out and finds h or before that door in, which it does about three seconds after he t hundred vials.

"Where?" Carella said.

"I got no idea," Seronia said.

"But in the church someplace."

"In the church someplace," she said. "D y'think that's funny? Nate turnin' the church stash pad?" "Yes, very funny," Carella said. "Wha

the J of the story?"

"The rest is like he tole you. The pries' comes yellin' an' hollerin' an' somebody calls the cops then ever'body goes home an' the pries' takes to the hospital where they wrap his head in End of story."

Not quite, Carella thought.

"You mine if I go now?" Seronia said. "I livin' to make."

Frank Oriella was a man in his early sixties, 'd been born into the Catholic Church when ;ses were still said in Latin, fish was eaten e and it was mandatory to go to confession taking holy communion. Nowadays, he was :lered by the ecumenical changes that had place sin he'd become a priest. He had only week, for example, attended a fune service in church in Calm's Point, where presumably to the deceased his way to Heaven the astor had played a guitar and had sung what Sounded like a pop song. This was in a Catholic l! This was not some little church down south a tin roof. This was a big, substantial Catholic church! With a priest who played the guitar and sang! Fathe Oriella still shook his head in wonder at the memory.

That Tuesday afternoon, when Carella and Hawes arrived at the church was shaking his head and trying to put together a new office in the had once been occupied by Father Michael. a small church in a poor neighborhood. The here at St. Catherine's was more a cottage than ho Fashioned of stone that echoed the fl the adjoining garden, it consi of two small kitchen, and an even smaller office, the church termino for which was long hall connected the rectory to the church, sacrist Uptown Father Michael had enjoyed of a rather more opulent house.

His secretary of thirty years, a woman Marcella Palumbo, to whom he spoke English and in Italian, was busily unpac cardboard cartons of files which Father transferred to the open drawers of green cabinets Both Oriella and Marcella had white and they were both wearing black Looking much like citified penguins, they bobbed about the small off the priest complaining was inhuman to transfer a man from a parish served for more than forty years, his clucking her tongue in sympath while she box after box of files. It occurred to Carella files they unloading pertained to previous parish and would be of little worth perhaps he'd carted them along for reasons.

"I can understand the bishop's thinking," he this does not make his decision any more for me."

His accent was not basso profundo buffone; he not sound like a recen immigrant. Rather, the "ons and cadences of his speech made it sound :areful, studied, somewhat formal. In contrast, spoke with a thick Neapolitan accent that her presence on these shores for the past yea

"The bishop surmises," Oriella said, "that after a such as this one, will take an older, more experienced priest to pull the parish together again.

mine to question. But have they given any consideration to the shamb my old parish will There are people at St. John the Martyr been worshipping there since I first became apriest. That was forty-two years

ago. Some of these people are eighty, ninety years old. How will the react to such a change? To a new priest?" "Vergogna, vergogna," Marc said, shaking her head and tackling yet another carton.

"It might have been wiser," Oriella said, "to send the newly appoint priest here, instead of to St. John's. This parish has already weath a shock.

Now there will be two shocks to overcome, one here and another one there." "Sure, what do they know?" Marcella said.

It sounded like "Shoo, wottaday nose?"

"Marcella Bella here," he said, pleased when she Waved away his playfully flattering nickname, "started working for me when the subw clean and it wasn't worth your life to travel after ten o'clock. I h difficult time conv her to accompany me here. She lives in Riw just few blocks from St. John's. The difficult one for a woman getting on the neighborhood, with all due respect for w people do, is not the b in the world, is it?"

"No, not the very best," Hawes admitted.

"But complaining about the pasture isn't mend the fences, is it?" he said. "These files accumulation of a lifetime, my sermons, letters priests all over the world, articles on Jesus Catholic Church, revie of inspirational anything pertaining to the spiritual life. To them behind at St. John's would have been leaving my own children there."

"Vergogna, vergogna," Marcella said again.

Hawes did not know what she was saying, gathered from the clucking o her tongue shaking of her head that she was not happy Father Oriella transfer here. Carella knew was saying, "Shame, shame," referring to stupidity of the diocese in transferring the secretary, the files, t whole damn thing. She not going to like this place. She knew that fr minute they'd walked into a rectory half the the one at St. John's. what kind of could an Irish be? Martha Whatever, eh? This erson to t care of an Italian priest? Or so Carella ;ad it. Vergogna, vergogna.

"Actually, we'll have some more files for you in a little while," he said.

"Oh?" Oriella said.

"Cosa ?" Marcella asked.

"More files," the priest said, and then, in Italian, "Anche pia filz and in English again, "What files?"

"Father Michael's. We're almost finished with them." "They'll be use to you," Hawes said. "For the receipts, records of payments..."

"Remind me to call the bishop," Oriella said, snapping his fingers, turning to Marcella. "I have to ask him whether I should close out t St. John's account and start a new one here, or whether Father Danie and I can simply use the old accounts."

He turned back to the detectives and said, "They sent a young man straight out of the seminary, he's twenty-four years old, Daniel Robles, a Puerto Rican. He's going to be dealing with octogenarian Italians, young Daniel, he's going to be stepping into a lion's den."

Marcella burst out laughing.

"I should have left you there to help him out," Oriella said, teasin her.

"Hey, sure," Marcella said.

It sounded like "Ay, shoo."

"The reason we came by," Carella said, "is we'd like to do a search the church, if that's with you."

"A search?" "Cosa?" Marcella asked.

"Una ricerca," Oriella said. "But a se what?"

"Narcotics," Hawes said.

"Here?" Oriella said.

It was unthinkable that there would be here inside the church. This like Devil would be preaching next Sunday's mass single word "Here?" expressed not only disbelief but revulsion as well. Here?

Dope? Here?

"If the story we have is reliable," Hawes Marcella, who had apparent understoodi word, was already shaking her head again.

"So we'd like to look around," Carella said if we come up with anything. If there is dope the church, if dope is somehow involved in well.., let's say that might change things."

"Of course," Oriella said, and shrugged as say This is entirely preposterous, dope church, but if you wish to look for it, by all ah I am but a mere devoted servant of transferred from my beloved paris uptown to insufferable part of the city.

"We'll try not to get in your way," Hwes said "Is Mrs. Hennessy here Carella asked. thought she might show us around."

"She's in the kitchen," Marcella said.

It sounded like "She's inna kitch." I'll buzz her," Oriella said, and went to his desk.

a button on the base of his phone, he waited, then said, "Mrs. Henne could you come in, .,ase?" Marcella scowled. "Thank you," Oriella and put the phone back on the cradle. "She'll be lright here," he said, just then Alexis the autiful little blonde girl with the serious bro eyes and the solemn air ... appeared in the doorway o the office, sa "Excuse me," and then recognized arella.

"Hello, Mr. Carella," she said, "I'm Alexis "Donnell, we met Saturda last "Yes, I remember," Carella said. "How are you?" | "Fine, thanks she said, and hesitated, and then asked, "Have you learned anything yet?"

.. "Few things," he said.

Alexis nodded, her brown eyes thoughtful, her face bearing the same sorrowful expression that had preceded tears last Saturday. She was wearing a blue blazer with a gold embroidered school crest on the le breast pocket, pleated green plaid skirt, blue knee-high socks, brown walking shoes; Carella figured she had come here directly from schoo She turned to Oriella and said, "I hope I'm not

interrupting anything, Father..." "Not at all," Oriella said.

"But we're not sure.., the kids in the C.Y.O... We're not sure what should do about Friday night's dance." She turned to Carella and is big dance we have every year at the be of June. We've been planning for a long then, to Father Oriella again, "We Friday's regular dance but we don't know we're supposed to do now. We don't want anything disrespectful to Father Michael's But Gloria has the check Father

Michael and she doesn't know whether to give it to He not. For the b Friday night."

"Kenny?" Father Oriella said.

"Kenny Walsh," she said. "He's leader Wanderers, the band that's supposed to asked for a hundred-dollar deposit, and

Michael gave Gloria the check, but now we :. KNOW."

Oriella said, "Mmm," and thought about problem for what seemed a lon time.

asked, "Was Father Michael involved in planning of this dance?" "Oh, yes," Alexis said. "In fact, he was the who started them. The First June dances."

"For what purpose?" Oriella asked. "How are proceeds used?"

Straight to the point, Carella thought, wondered what Arthur L. Fame who'd taken a about the money-changers in the temple --

think of the new parish priest.

"We buy baskets for the poor," Alexis said.

i.

"Baskets?"

lod baskets, yes, Father. To take around on morning." "Oriella said, nodded in satisfaction to who nodded in return.

"Last year, we made around two thousand "Alexis said.

you say these dances on the first day of June Father Michael's idea?

,. "Oh, yes, Father. He started them three years "

:i. "Then I think it would be a fitting memorial to the dance as scheduled. In honor of Father l's devotion to the needy of this pari You give Kenny his check," Oriella said. "And I will end the dance myself, and give my blessing to everyone there." "Thank you, Father, she said. "I'll tell Gloria."

She was starting out when Martha Hennessy peared in the door-frame behind her. The tiny fffice was about to get crowded. Hawes had been too many small crafts during his tour of duty in the Navy; he was beginning to feel claustrophobic.

"Mrs. Hennessy," he said, "'we'd like to look through the church, we were hoping you'd show us around."

"I'd be happy to," she said, and then, to Alexis, "Hello, darlin" how are you?" "Fine, thanks, Mrs. Hennessy," Alexis said, "thanks, again Father, we'll look for you on Friday night," and stepped out into the small entry that

Separated the chancellery from the remainder of the rectory. As Hawe and Carella said their Father Oriella, she began chatting Hennessy, was still talking to her came out a moment later. She turned to C on giving him the impression that she' waiting for him.

"There's something I want to tell you," "Sure," he said.

"Could we talk privately?"

Something in her dark eyes signaled "

"I'll meet you in the church," he said to and then led Alexis outside to the garden where priest had been slain. The roses were still in their aroma overpowering. Where once there had been the chalked outline of the priest on the floor of the garden, there was now only the grey weathered stone itself. They walked to the maple sat on the low stone bench that circled it. The moss on the tree behind them. Ivy climbed the walls of the cottage. This could have been a courtyard in an English village.

"I don't want to get anyone in trouble," said.

He waited.

"But..."

The essential word.

Still, he waited.

"This was Easter Sunday," she said. "I was going downtown to meet my friend Gloria outside movie theater on Eleventh and The Stem. This morning has been around two-thirty, a very windy day, I "

skirts flapping about her legs, long blonde hair in the wind. She is supposed to meet Gloria at the theater at three, an Eddie Murphy picture. Gloria and Alexis are both freshmen at a school on Seventh and Culver. The Graham school. One of the few good schools in the precinct, is only half a block away from a public school an assistant principal recently was stabbed to break up a fistfight. She still has almost half hour before she's supposed to meet her, though, still has plenty of time. although she's been to mass early this morning, she is St. Catherine

again now, coming up the Street side where someone has painted a red star on the green gate leading to the and the rectory, planning to continue north to Stem, where the theater is, but instead making a o Culver, and impulsively going into the through the big entrance door which are closed but unlocked...

"I thought I'd say a few extra prayers, this was, like, you know, Ea Sunday..."

.. coming through the narthex, and walking up the center aisle under nave, the church empty, her heels clicking on the polished wooden fl

- this is Easter Sunday and she is wearing patent leather Shoes with medium-high heels -- clicking as she approaches the crossing, the transept on her left, the :, sacristy on her right, the brass chain

immediately ahead of her, and behind it the the huge cross with Jesu hanging on it and from a dozen wounds in his side and his "... all a once there were voices, Michael's voice and someone else's..."

... coming from the paneled corridor

from the sacristy into the priest's small stone his rectory, the voi startling her because first time she has ever heard Father Michael i anger. She stops dead in the center of the cro:

here where the middle of Jesus's chest we were this a true cross rat than the tradi stone-and-timber architectural re stands shocked and silent as the priest's voice

down the corridor as if from the neck of a its open cup, rushing int the church, echoin vaulted ceiling, This is blackmail, he is blackma

She does not know quite what do do. She sudden guilt of a child ... is wearing she is only thirteen eavesdropping on an fearful she will discovered in the next instant punished for her transgression, eithe the by the woman he is... "A woman?" Carella said at once. "Not a He with a woman?"

"Yes."

"And you heard him use the word blackmail?"

..s. And she said, "I'm doing this for your own . ' '

then what?"

lexis stands there at the middle of the e-and-timber cross that is St. Catherine's rch, looking up at the huge plaster figure of hanging on

genuine oaken cross behind the the priest's voice coming again from right, is afraid to turn her head to locate the voice, she she will discover Father Michael lunging at in a rage, shouting at her as he shouts at the Get out of my sight, how dare you, how dare to, and the woman is suddenly laughing, the laughter echoing, echoing, and there the sound of slap, flesh hitting flesh. Alexis turns and runs, terrified, they are both shouting behind her now, she us for the entrance doors, heels strafing the wooden floor, slipping, almost losing her balance, springing for the back of the nearest bench, righting herself running again, running, running, she is not used to heels, throwing the central portal doors and coming face to face with a black man, blood streaming down his... "Nathan Hooper," Carella said.

"I screamed, I shoved myself past him, there were other men chasing I ran away from there as fast as I could."

She had called them men. And to her terrified eyes those husky young teenagers indeed must have appeared to be men. But hadn't she... ?

"Doesn't that name mean anything to asked. "Nathan Hooper?"

"Yes, of course, now it does, I saw his

the newspaper, I even saw him in television. But at the time, he was just this... black man with blood running down his face, I wanted to get out of there. I think mind I made some crazy kind of connect Father Michael yelling and the woman all the yelling outside the church I've never scared in my life. All that blood. All that and "Did you see who the woman was?" asked.

"I don't want to get anyone in trouble," said, and looked away.

He waited.

"But..." she said.

And still he waited.

"If she had anything to do with Father murder, then..."

Her eyes met his.

"Who was she?" he said. "Was she anyone know?" "I only saw her from back," Alexis said.

"What'd she look like?"

"She was a tall woman with straight blonde Alexis said. "Like mine."

And like Kristin Lund's, Carella thought.

what'd you do?" Shad Russell asked. "Rob a "Not quite," Marilyn said

"Then what? Saturday you're here haggling over price of a gun . which by the way, was a very bargain .- and Tuesday you're back with, how you say?"

"Five hundred thousand."

"You got that much change in your pocketbook "Sure," Marilyn said.

I'll bet," Russell said knowingly. "So how'd you into all this money "Liquidation," she said.

"Of who? Who'd you dust, honey?"

"I understand that the normal return on a drug investment is eight t one," she said, straight for the jugular. "I need two million dollar I'm assuming if I invest half a million..."

"Is that what we're talking here?" Russell said, surprised. "Dope?" told you on the phone I was looking to make an investment."

"I thought you meant an investment of time. I thought you were all a once interested in one of my major situations."

"I am. The Colombian merchant."

"But not in the same way I hoped you'd be interested."

"No, not in that way," Marilyn said, and wondered if she'd have to through go damn ex-hooker routine yet another time be could settle down to the business at hand. in a little bar off St. Sebastian Avenue, t from Russell's hotel. There were enough girls in it, even at this ea hour, to satisfy of every major Colombian merchant in they were all either black or Hispanic, and Colombian gentlemen preferred blondes.

Smiling like a crocodile, Russell leaned table and said, "Maybe you could mix pleasure in with the business, what do you

"I think no, and let's cut the crap, please.:i many keys of cocaine I get for the hundred?" "That kind of bread, that's peanuts Russell said, immediately getting down to tacks. "There's no chance of a discount, you'd to pay the going rate, which is very high these beca of all the pressure. Forty, fifty grand a depending on the quality. what does that Divide five hundred by fifty, what do you get?" "Ten, she said, and wondered where he'd to school.

"Okay, that's if we're paying fifty, we get keys. If we're paying fo

what do we get?"

"Twelve and a half."

"So average it out, let's say you pay

let's say you get eleven keys for the five that'd be doing good these days."

how much would those eleven keys be on the street?" , 'You're talking high, eight to one, that's high."

"Then what?"

"You step on a kilo even once, you come away with ten thousand bags of crack. Nowadays, a bag is for twenty-five bucks. That's a quarter of a you come away with, for the one key. That you forty-five for. That's around five and a half to you'd be getting. So figure you can turn five into like two million seven, something in Exactly the amount you need," Russell said, smiled his crocodile smile.

"No, all I need is two." "Plus my commission," he said, still smiling

"That seems very steep."

"Seven hundred thousand is steep?" Russell said, looking offended. "You somebody cheaper?"

In fact, you know anybody at all?"

"I can always call Houston again. I'm sure Sam can find me..."

"Sure, call him. Meanwhile, I got the feeling you were in some kinda hurry." "Even so, that's steep," she said, shaking her head. "Seven hundred thousand? That's very steep."

Bargaining. When her fucking life was at stake.

Settle with the man, she thought.

"So is that it?" Russell said. "Are we finished talking here?"

"For that kind of I'd money expect you to the entire transaction," she said. Still bargaining.

"Meaning what?"

"Setting it up, making the buy, turning "

"I can tell you right now nobody's going eleven keys to somebody invisible."

"Oh? Did you suddenly get invisible?"

"I'm talking about they smell I'm making for somebody else, the Uzis come out. They know who they're doing business with."

"I can't get involved in this," she said.

Not bargaining this time. Merely Willis. Thinking that if something during the transaction, if the police came might hurt Willis somehow. Thinking... "Then don't get involved in moving Russell said. "If you want to make a deal, I'll the buy for you. You show with the money, the buy yourself. Then I'll see about around."

"I have to be positive you can turn it "Tell you what. If I can't turn it around, you owe me a nickel. Is that fair?"

"Then what do I do with the eleven keys?" "Snort it," Russell said, smiled his smile. "When do you need this money?"

"How about tomorrow afternoon?"

"Impossible."

"Then when?"

can't set up the buy before Thursday night, st. Have you got your hands on this money,?"

"I have a cashier's check."

"Honey, please don't make me laugh. In this business? A check?"

"A cashier's check is as good as cash."

"Then cash it."

"All right."

"You know anything about high-grade coke?"

"A little."

"Enough to know whether they're selling you sugar instead?"

"No."

I'll teach you. They'll expect you to test the stuff. Everything's a fuckin' ritual with them. You test it, you taste it, you give them t cash, they give you the shit, and you go your separate ways. You dev from the ritual, they think you're undercover and they blow you away ain't without its certain risks, this business," he said drily.

"When will you know for sure?"

"Tomorrow." I'll call you," she said.

"No, let me call you."

"No," she said.

"Why not?"

"Just no."

"Okay, you know where to reach me," Russell said, and shook his head if to say there understanding the ways of beautiful bro once earned living on their backs. "Give around this time tomorrow. If everythin way I figure, you better cash that check on and I'll let you know wh they wanna meet "No," she said. "Specify one-on-one. pick the place."

"They may not go for that."

"I'm paying top dollar. If they don't terms, tell them to go fuck themselves and we somebody else." "Tough lady," he said, and smiled. "You that gun I sold you?"

"No."

"You want my advice? Buy another one. me or somebody else, it don't matter. A bi this time." "What kind of gun did you have in mind?" as

"We done this before, you know," Mrs. said. "Father Michael and me. over the top to bottom searching for the dope."

"Yes," Carella said. "His sister told me."

"Nice lady, ain't she? The sister." "Yes," Carella said. "Very nice."

"I thought so first time I met her," Mrs. Hennes said, smiling at th memory.

When was't at?" "Shortly before Easter," she said. "Around St. Day."

Which fell each year on the seventeenth of Which certainly would hav qualified as

before Easter" in that Easter this year had on the fifteenth of April Carella wondered if then Father Michael had been involved with his serious lady. In which case, why hadn't he mentioned her to his sister while she was visiting here?

: "... a search for dope?" Hawes was saying.

|! "Well, we got a phone call," Mrs. Hennessy said.

|i "What phone call?

lthe "Krissie took a phone call one afternoon, I was in office when it..." When was this.

"Last month someone.

"When last month?"

"About a week after that black boy got beat up," Mrs. Hennessy said. "The call was for Father Michael. He took it, listened for a few minutes, said, 'I don't know what you're talking about,' and hung up."

"Who was it?"

"Who was who?"

"On the phone."

"Oh. I don't know. But Father Michael turned to Krissie and said, 'This guy says...'"

"Is he calling her?"

that what Hawes "Yes. Or sometimes Krissie." Hawes nodded and said nothing. But the look that crossed his face.

"Kris, this guy says there's a dope hidden church here and he wants it back," Mrs. Hennessy said, and nodded.

"So it was a man on the phone," Hawes "I guess so." "Did Father Michael say who it was?" asked.

"No, sir."

"He didn't say it was Nathan Hooper, did he?" "No, sir."

"Did he say it sounded like a black person?"

"No, sir. He didn't say anything but what I told you he said. 'This guy says...'"

there's dope the church here and he wants it back.' Is what Michael said. So we begun looking for it."

"Where'd you look?"

"Everywhere."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning everywhere. Places hadn't cleaned or disturbed since the ch was built, a hundred years thick. Nooks and crannies I know existed. Secret passageways..."

"Secret passageways?" Hawes said.

"This church used to be part of the under "Mrs. Hennessy said. "Slav escaping the south used to come hide in the church here."

"What goes around comes around," Hawes said, nodded.

Carella, deep in thought, missed Hawes's .,nce to history's little repetitions. He was :mbering back to when Marilyn Hollis was a ect i poisoning, and Willis had fallen in love with her. It had made thing even though the ending turned out to be happy one. Carella was all i favor of happy ndings. But judging from the look that had crossed

i-Hawes face when he'd heard that the called --

priest

his secretary either Kris or Krissie rather than Kristin or Miss. Lu or Whatever the Hell, Carella "Suspected that his this time around h been partner |similarly stricken, and he hoped with all his might Krissie Lund turned out to be similarly clean.

Because /f she was the woman who'd tried to blackmail Father Michael Easter Sunday... Or, worse, if she was the woman who'd been intimate involved with the priest...

Or, worse yet, /f she was both adulteress and blackmailer at one and same time..

- "Show us the easy places first," Haes told Mrs. I'Iennessy.

She always became apprehensive when he started drinking heavily befo dinner. All the other times had happened when he'd come directly hom the store and started the evening by pouring a stiff drink. It was o a little past six now, he'd already consumed two healthy and was pou himself a third one at the cou near the kitchen sink. Ice-cube tray open

on counter. Tanqueray gin, he drank only the Tanqueray or Beefeater. Wouldn't allow any gin in the house. Asked her once if she knew that was made from juniper berries? And did she think juniper berries were poisonous? She knew whether he was kidding or not. He said things just to confuse her. He could be cruel that way.

She never knew whether one of his spells, she guessed you could call them... triggered by something that had happened at home that day, whether they had something with the calendar, or the phases of the moon or tides like a woman's period. She suspected was something sexual about these spells of his, what happened was some kind of substitute for

that he got off on first getting drunk and then... "You disapprove, right?" he said.

"I'm making a nice dinner for us," she said.

"Which means you disapprove, right?"

Pouring the gin liberally over the ice cubes in short fat tumbler. Fingers curled around the glass, there was thunder in the east. It had been days now since they'd had any rain. Rain would be welcome.

"I asked you a question, Sally."

She wondered if he was already drunk. Usually it took more than two drinks, however heavily he'd poured them. She didn't want anything to start. And yet, whenever he got this way, no matter how carefully she tiptoed around him, there didn't seem to be anything she could do to prevent what came next. It was like a button inside him got pushed, then all the gears started turning and meshing, and there was nothing you could do to stop the machine.

Except maybe get out of here. Get away from the machine. Far away from it. She thought maybe she should get out of here right this minute, before the machine started again.

"Sally?" "Yes, Art," she said, and realized this was a mistake the moment it left her mouth. His name was Arthur, he liked to be called his full name. Arthur.

Not Art, not Artie, but Arthur. Said Arthur sounded majestic, Arthur King, whereas Art or Artie sounded like garage mechanics. "I'm sorry," she said at once.

"You still haven't answered my question," he said.

Good. He was ignoring the fact that she'd called him Art rather than Arthur. Maybe this wasn't going to be a bad one, after all, maybe tonight the machine would merely grind to a halt before it...

"Did you hear my question, Sally?"

"I'm sorry, Arthur..."

Making certain she called him Arthur this "... what was the question

"Do you disapprove of my drinking?"

"Not when you do it in moderation. Because making us a nice dinner tonight, Arthur..."

"What nice dinner are you making us toni asked mockingly, and lifted short fat his lips, and drained it.

Outside, lightning flashed and thunder "Salmon steak," she said quick
"With lovely asparagus I got flesh at the Koreans'." "I hate asparagus," he said.

"I thought you liked asparagus," she thought it was broccoli you hate
"I hate asparagus and broccoli," he said, and to the counter again a
lifted two ice cubes tray and dropped them into the tumbler. She he
would not pour himself another drink.

He poured himself another drink.

"Asparagus and broccoli and cauliflower the other shitty vegetables
make that I hate, said. "Brussels sprouts..."

"I thought you liked..."

"... and cabbage and all of them," he said, lifted the glass to his
lips. "A man gets forty-
nine years old, he's been married to the woman
for twenty-
five years, you think she'd what he likes to eat and what he
doesn't like to eat.

But oh no, not Fat Sally..."

The Fat Sally hurt.

He was going to hurt her tonight.

"... Fat Sally goes her merry fat way, cooking whatever the fuck she
wishes to cook, with never a thought as to what her husband might..."

"I give a lot of thought to..."

"Shut up!" he said.

I have to get out of here, she thought. The last time I waited too long I waited until it got out of hand, and then there was no getting away. I don't care if the dinner burns to a crisp, she thought, I don't care if a fire starts in the stove, I have to get out of here. Now.

But she waited.

Giving him the benefit of the doubt.

Because after the last time, when she'd gone to Father Michael to tell him what had happened, things seemed to get a little better, this was what... almost two months ago, the beginning of April, shortly before Easter, right, after he'd written that terrible letter. She'd asked him not to write the letter, she'd told him he'd be making a fool of himself before the entire congregation, but he'd insisted on typing it. Here he was in the apartment and then taking it to the bank to Xerox however many copies he'd needed, said he resented the way the priest was turning the church into a financial institution, his words. And, of course, the congregation did think he was a fool for writing that dumb letter, the very next Sunday Father Michael made a sermon about money, this time mentioning the letter he'd received, the letter Arthur had sent.., yes, right this was exactly a week before Easter this was his second Sunday in April. He'd got that night. And the very next day, she'd gone to Father Michael, her eyes puffy, her lip split... "The very bad habit you have, Sally, interrupting," he said.

"Oh, I know," she said pleasantly, still giving him the benefit of the doubt, still hoping that her "the priest had changed the situation at that time that Arthur realized someone else what was going on here. But the priest was dead.

Someone had killed the priest.

... even when I was a young girl," she said voice trailing, "I used to..."

And fell silent.

Interrupt, she thought.

All the time, she thought.

He was standing at the counter, putting cubes into the glass. She had lost count of how many drinks he'd had already. Outside, there was lightning and then thunder, and then the rain down in sheets, driven by a fierce wind. She was staring at his back. He stood stock still at the bar with his hand wrapped around the lever that pried the ice-cube tray. Little egg-crate

tray, the lever fastened to them. The tray empty w. The ice cubes all gone. The rain coming down in sheets outside.

"Miss. Zaftig," he said. "Isn't that what your little Jewboy used to call you?"

"Actually, he did refer to me as zafiig, yes," she said, "but he never called me Miss. Zaftig as such."

Don't contradict him, she thought. Agree with everything he says!

"Little Miss. Zaftig," he said, "running to the fucking priest!"

"Well, if you hadn't..."

"Washing our dirty laundry in public I"

"There wouldn't have been any dirty..."

"Taking our dirty laundry to church and washing it for the priest!"

"Next time, don't..."

His arm came lashing out at her in a backhanded swipe. His hand was still curled around the lever of the egg-crate divider, the metal outlining twelve empty squares now, the metal edges hitting her face only barely scratching it because this was truly an ineffectual weapon a silly weapon really, this aluminum tray divider dangling limply at end of a lever, hardly a weapon at all.

The gin bottle was quite another thing.

The gin bottle was green and stout, and it had a little red seal on that identified it as the genuine article, the Tanqueray, the good stuff. As quickly as he had swung the tray divider, he now dropped it clattering to the tiled kitchen floor, and immediately grasped the bottle its neck and yanked it off counter, and pulled it back as though preparing forehand tennis shot, the bottle coming around as it were racket level with a ball coming in shoulder high, swinging it, eye on the ball, high was where her head was.

A red circle of blood splashed onto the go alongside the red seal. G sloshed from the neck of the bottle onto his wrist, onto the floor, spurted now from the gash the bottle had alongside her left eye. The blood startled him. seemed to realize all at once that he was her lethal weapon, that this heavy fashioned of thick green glass could easily her if he were not terribly careful. He said, really?" as if blaming her for his own stupidity picking up the bottle, in using the bottle on her, really?" and threw the bottle into the deliberately smashing it, shards of green exploding up onto the air, caught for a

against a dazzling backdrop of yellow-white light lightning flashed again beyond the window.

Thunder rolled.

Oddly, he seemed more dangerous now.

Bereft of any weapons but his, his miscalculating how powerful or how close those hands could be (but she knew), he closed in where she stood cowering against the refrigerator door, blood gushing from the wound on her head, bloody left hand clenched to her temple, her right hand held out like a traffic cop's, the fingers widespread, "Don't, Arthur," she said, "please, don't," but he just kept repeating over and over again quite senselessly now, "Oh, really?" as if he were contradicting something she had just said, or perhaps asking for further explanation of what she'd said, "Oh, really?" while he slapped her over and over again methodically, his huge hands punishing her for whatever sin in his drunkenness he imagined she'd committed.

She reached for the knife on the drainboard.

And quite calmly stabbed him.

The Q and A took place in Lieutenant B's office at the 87th Precinct, half an hour after Arthur Llewelyn Fames was released from General. He had been treated there for a knife in the left shoulder and had been charged immediately with Assault 1st Degree: "With intent to cause serious physical injury to another, " such injury to such person or to a third person means of a deadly weapon or a dangerous instrument," a Class-C Felony punishable by minimum of three and a maximum of fifteen.

To sweeten the pudding, he had also been charged with Attempted Murder, a Class-B punishable by a minimum of three and a maximum twenty-five. His wife, Sally Louise Fames, had charged with the identical crimes, but in her opinion, around the old station house was that she easily beat both rates by pleading self-defense. gathered detectives and an assistant district attorney named Nellie Brand were here this Wednesday morning at ten o'clock and so much to make certain their case against Fames would stick - they knew they had real meat here but to find out what he knew about the murder of Father Michael Bimey.

Carella had called Nellie the moment he realized they had here a victim whose wife had earlier gone to Father Michael to report previous abuses.

This same man had written the priest a letter that in itself seemed imply a threat, however veiled. And, by his own admission, he had gone to the church sometime during the afternoon of Easter Sunday, where

least one witness Nathan Hooper had reported hearing the priest in violent argument with a man.

Nellie was thirty-two years old, with alert blue eyes and sand-colored hair cut in a flying wedge that seemed appropriate to her breezy style. She was wearing this morning a dark blue skirt with a grey jacket, a pink man-tailored shirt with a narrow red-and-blue silk rep tie, and blue pumps with moderate heels. Carella liked her a lot; she reminded him somehow of his sister Angela, though she didn't resemble her in slightest.

Sitting on the edge of the lieutenant's desk, she once again informed Fames of his rights, and then asked him if he was certain he did not wish an attorney present. Like most amateurs who suddenly find themselves involved with the law, Fames told he didn't need a lawyer because he hadn't done anything, it was his wife who'd committed god crime here! Carella was thinking every little cheap thief on the street asked for attorney the moment he was clapped in cuffs.

Nellie dutifully informed Fames that he nonetheless stop the question at any time chose to, or even request a lawyer whenever he needed one, even though he'd declined one and asked him again if he understood all this, Fames rather testily said, "Of course I do I look like an idiot? My wife tried to kill me!"

Miranda-Escobedo safely out of the way, switched on the tape recorder, nodded to stenographer who was taking standby notes, said for the tape that this was 10:07 on morning of May 30, identified the location everyone in it, and then began the questioning:

May I have your full name, please?

Arthur Llewellyn Fames.

And your address?

157 Grover Park South.

In what apartment, please?

12C.

Do you live in that apartment, at that address with your wife, Sally Louise Fames?

I do. Who tried to kill me last night.-

Mr. Farnes, were you treated at last night in the Emergency Room at General for a knife wound in the left Damn right I was.

And were you held for overnight observation at Greer General, and... was.

... and released at nine-thirty-two this morning in custody of Detectives Hawes and Carella... I was.

... who transported you here to the 87th Precinct for questioning, is that correct?

That's correct.

You've been informed, have you not, that you've been charged with First Degree Assault, a Class-C felony... I have.

And with Attempted Murder as well, which is a Class-B felony.

It was my wife who tried to kill me!

But were you informed of these charges against you?

I was.

And, of course, you were read your rights in accordance with the Supreme Court decisions in Miranda and Escobedo, and you said you understood those rights, did you not?

You read them to me, and I said I understood them.

And declined your right to an attorney, is that also correct?

Yes.

Very well, Mr. Farnes... Leaning in closer to him now, conveying impression that now that all the bullshit was the way, she was ready to take off the gloves.

. can you tell me how you happened to that knife wound in your shoulder

/: She went crazy.

Q: Who do you mean, please?

/: Sally.

O: Your wife, Sally Louise Farnes?

A: Yes.

(2: Went crazy, you say?

A: Yes.

O: Can you tell me what you mean by that?

/: She went crazy, what do you think that me We were sitting in the kitchen, and all at

she picked up the knife and stabbed me. N Totally nuts!

O: Sitting where in the kitchen? At the Doing what?

A: Talking.

Q: About what?

A: I don't remember.

O: Try to remember.

A: How am I supposed to remember what talking about? She stabbed me, goddamn it!

O."

Do you remember telling your wife that s had a bad habit of interrupt yod while were...?

A: No.

The way you just interrupted me.

I'm sorry if I interrupted you. I thought you were finished with wha you were saying.

No, I wasn't.

Then I'm sorry.

But isn't that what you told your wife? That she had a bad habit of interrupting?

I may have said that, I don't remember. It is a bad habit. You said yourself.

I don't believe I said that.

Well, you seemed to get upset when I interrupted you just now.

Did you get upset when your wife interrupted you?

People shouldn't interrupt other people.

Does that upset you? When your wife interrupts?

It would upset anyone. Getting interrupted. I suppose you realize, d you, that she stabbed me, don't you? I mean, I really don't see the point of did she interrupt me, did I interrupt her, it was me who got stabbed, there are hospital records to prove I got stabbed, you said yourself there's a knife wound in my left shoulder, it didn't get th by magic, my wife stabbed me, goddamn it!

Do you also remember telling your wife...?

Did you hear what I just said?

Yes, Mr. Farnes, I heard you.

I mean, did you hear a word of what I just said?

I heard all of it, yes.

Then do you understand that my wife stab. me?

Yes, sir, I understand that. She has, in admitted stabbing you.

Well, good, at least she had the decency that!

Do you remember telling her that she also a bad habit of washing you dirty linen public?

No, I don't remember that.

Of taking your dirty linen to the church washing it for the priest?

No, why would I say anything like that?

Washing it for Father Michael Birney.

No. No.

Telling him about certain personal 1: you were having.

We weren't having any personal problems.

Mr. Farnes, did you strike your wife with divider from an ice-cube tray?

No.

Mr. Fames, I show you this tray-divider was recovered from apartment 12C at 1 Grover Park South and tagged as evidence Detectives Carella and Hawes of the Precinct. Do you recognize it? .

I do not.

Mr. Fames, you are aware, are you not, your fingerprints were taken you arrived here at the station house?

I am.

And you are aware, of course, that the Police Department's Fingerprint Section can recover latent prints from inanimate objects and compare those prints with, for example, your fingerprints taken here at the station house?

I am aware of that.

Do you still say you do not recognize this tray-divider?

I never saw it in my life.

Mr. Fames, I show you the broken neck of a bottle recovered from the sink in apartment 12C at 157 Grover Park South and tagged as evidence Detectives Carella and Hawes of the 87th Precinct. Keeping in mind what I just told you about fingerprints, I ask you now did you strike your wife with the bottle this neck was once a part of?.

I did not.

That is to say, a bottle containing what remained of a fifth of Tanqueray gin?

I did not.

Mr. Fames, where were you on Easter Sunday?

What?

I asked you where you were on Easter Sunday.

Home, where do you think I was? Easter? Of course I was home.

All day?

All day.

Didn't you tell Detectives Hawes and C that you went to St. Catherin sometime that afternoon?

Oh. Yes. I'd forgotten that.

Did you go to the church that afternoon?

Yes.

Why?

To talk to Father Michael.

What about?

A letter I'd written to him. We'd ha, misunderstanding about the let I w clear it up with him.

What time did you get to the church?

I don't remember.

Would it have been between two-thirty three?

I really don't know. There was a police outside.

Oh, Jesus, Carella thought, there it goes, up the chimney! Both Nath Hooper and O'Donnell claimed to have heard the priest m with either man or a woman, depending whose story you believed'm sometime two-thirty and three. But if Edward's car was there when Fames came to the church had to sometime after the argument had taken place. unless Fames lying... Can you describe that car for me?

Trying to make certain the car had actually been there when he arriv She'd been briefed before the questioning began, she knew that the h hour between two-thirty and three was critical. If Farnes had come to the church after that time, then he could not have been the person arguing with Father Michael.

It was a police car. What's there to describe about a police car?

Do you remember the markings on it?

No. A blue-and-white car, like any other police car in this city.

Mr. Fames, where were you between seven and seven-thirty on the night of May twenty-fourth?

The night of the murder. She was going for the gold. Never mind beat around the bush. Farnes could either account for his time while the priest was being murdered -- or he could not.

When was that? May twenty-fourth?

Last Thursday. Do you remember where you were?

Last Thursday.

Yes.

I'm trying to remember. I think I worked late last Thursday. I think was at the store inventory.

What do you mean by the store?

My store. I sell men's clothing.

Where is this store, Mr. Farnes?

On The Stem. Between Carson and Coles. called C&C Men's Furnishings. Because of cross streets. Carson and Coles. Up p Twentieth. Across t street from the Mcdonald' s.

And you say you were there taking "

on the night of May twenty-fourth.

Yes. I'm pretty certain that's where I was.

Were you there at seven P.M.?

If I was there, then yes, I was there at P.M.

And if you were there, were you also seven-thirty P.M.?

Yes, if I was there, I would have been that time, too.

And at eight P.M.?

Yes.

And at nine?

Yes. All night.

If you were there.

Yes. But I'm fairly certain I was there.

But you're not positive.

No, I'm not positive.

Was anyone with you?

No.

You were alone.

Yes.

Do you normally take inventory alone?

Yes.

So if you were at the store that night, you were there alone.

Yes.

Which means we have only your word for your whereabouts on the night May twenty-fourth.

Well, if I was there, there'd be a record.

Oh? What kind of record, Mr. Fames?

My inventory sheets would have a date on them. An inventory is worthless, you see, unless it's dated. The whole purpose of an inventory is to keep you up to date on what you have in stock. That's the whole purpose.

Yes. And where would you have indicated this date?

In the inventory log. The date, and the quantity and size and color any particular item. So I'll know when to reorder. That's the purpose of an inventory.

Yes. Do you still have this inventory log?

I'm sure I do.

Where is it?

At the store, most likely. I usually keep it at the store.

And can you lay your hands on it at any time?

To check the date? So that you can positively say you were in the st taking "

night long on May twenty-fourth?

Unless it's missing for one reason or Missing? Why would it be missi

Well, you know this city. Things get stolen the time.

Are you saying that someone may have your inventory log?

It's possible.

Why would anyone want to steal an log?

This city, who knows?

So what you're saying, actually, Mr. F that if the inventory log has been stolen, have no way of verifying when inventory-taking happened.

Or lost. The inventory log.

Stolen or lost or misplaced, you would way of verifying where you we on the of May twenty-fourth.

What has this got to do with my wife me?

It has to do with someone stabbing a priest, Fames.

Is that supposed to be a surprise?

I beg your pardon?

I mean, you're oh-so-very smart here, you, with your trick questions and your all around the mulberry bush,, do you you're dealing with a foo here? I have a successful business, I've been at the same location f fifteen years, I'm not a fool.

No one said you were, Mr. Fames.

Oh, no, you didn't come right out and say it, of course not. With th tape going? And this man taking notes? Of course not. But don't you think I realize what you're trying to do here?

You're trying to make a mountain out of a molehill. You're trying to that because I had an argument with Father Michael, that means... Di you have an argument with him?

I told you we had a misunderstanding.

Yes, but you didn't say you'd had an argument.

A misunderstanding, I said, a misunderstanding. Over a letter I sent the entire... Yes, but just now you said you'd had an argument. When you have this argument, Mr. Farnes?

A misunderstanding. Listen, I want to make this clear.., is that tap still going? I want it made perfectly clear on the tape that I meant say misunderstanding, not argument.

Misunderstanding. Your detectives came to see me about that damn let I told them the misunderstanding had been cleared up, Father Michael I settled the whole thing on Easter Sunday. There was no damn argume is that clear?

Q: On Easter Sunday, do you mean?

/k: On Easter Sunday or any other time. not argue. Period.

Q: Ever?

/,: Never.

O: Mr. Farnes, I can ask for a search locate the inventory log you mentione, feel certain you would want to help us fin wonder if you c accompany "

t/

detectives to your store... /: No. I want a lawyer.

Nellie looked at Carella. Carella looked

The stenographer looked up from his pad.

Byrnes shrugged. The only sound in the the whirring of the tape recorder. "Mr.

Nellie said at last, "am I to understand...?"

"You've got it, sister."

"Am I to understand that you will not locate that log?"

"Not unless a lawyer tells me you can do "What is it you think we're doing?"

"Taking me to the store against my will."

"Very well, Mr. Farnes, we'll request a warrant. Am I to understand further that you wish questioning to stop at this time?" "You've got sister," Farnes said again.

Nellie snapped off the tape recorder.

"We're off the air," she said. "You ever call sister again, I'll kick you in the balls, got it?" I'll mention that to my attorney," Farnes said.

"Please do," Nellie said, and walked out of the It was not until one o'clock that afternoon that Jila and Hawes obtained both a search warrant a Superior Court judge and a key to C&C 's Furnishings from Sally Farnes. Sally said she led it turned out that her husband had, fact, killed Father Michael, and she hoped further that he be sent to prison for the rest of his natural life. "he also mentioned that he usually kept his inventory log in the lower right-hand drawer of the desk in his office at the back of the store.

They found the office, they found the desk, and they found the log in the lower right-hand drawer.

The log indicated that Farnes had indeed taken inventory of his stock the twenty-fourth of May.

"Nellie'll be disappointed," Carella said. "She was hoping we'd catch him in a lie."

"This could still be a lie," Hawes said. "Just 'cause he wrote the twenty-fourth doesn't mean he actually did it on that date. He could have done it a week earlier, three days earlier, whenever."

"Say he killed the priest," Carella said. "What do you see for his motive?" "He's a nutcase," Hawes said. "He doesn't need a motive."

"Even a nutcase has what he thinks is a motive." "Okay, he was annoyed that his wife rattled him." "Then why not kill her? Why the priest." "9" "Because he had a further grievance with the priest."

"The whole business with the letter, huh?"

"Yeah, and being made to look foolish in front of the congregation. Nutcases take themselves seriously, Steve." "Yeah," Carella said.

.Both men were silent for several moments.

Then Carella said, Do you think he did it.

"No," Hawes said.

"Neither do I," Carella said.

The way Martha Hennessy later described it was just another teenage pack. You read them all the time now, these gangs going to "/

crazy and doing unspeakable things. This was in a dozen strapping young men, all of them white. Mrs. Hennessy could have understood it if they had been black or Hispanic, but white? They came into the church around 10 o'clock. It must've been she was in the rectory, heard a lot of noise in the church itself, ran through the paneled corridor leading to the sacristy where three of them already were, knocking over things, tearing the art. Inside the church itself, Father Oriella was in English and in Italian, and his secretary, an old Italian woman whose English was atrocious, was screaming for them to stop. Mrs. Hennessy ran back into the rectory and dialed 911 from the office telephone. A police car arrived in about three minutes flat.

The responding car was Edward's car, because the church was in the precinct's Edward Sector, and the two officers driving the car were the same man and woman who'd responded to the fracas here on Easter Sunday. The difference this afternoon, and the reason their response-time was so

rapid, was that after the priest's murder, they'd been called down to Headquarters and asked a lot of questions about their behavior on Easter Sunday, which Inspector Brian McIntyre from Internal Affairs found somewhat less than exemplary in a community rife with white-black

tensions. Mindful of the inspector's diatribe and reprimand, the morning Officers Joseph Esposito and Anna Maria Lopez caught the 10-39 -- a Crime In Progress, specified by the dispatcher as a "rampage at St. Catherine's Church" -

- they hit the hammer and screeched over to the church, where if this wasn't a rampage it sure as hell looked like one. Officer Lopez got on her walkie-talkie and called in an Assist Police

Officer, and within another three minutes, cars from the adjoining D and Frank sectors, and half a dozen foot-patrol officers assigned to

CPEP were responding to the looting swarming all over the church and the church and the rectory, rounding up what eventually turned out to be six teenagers, all of them white, all with Italian names, least of whom Robert Corrente. ::

Bobby and his pals all seemed to be rather an unidentified substance. A controlled seemed not to care that he was now in

a police squadroom, being charged with assortment of crimes, among w

was an upon Father Frank Oriella with a brass

Bobby had seized from the main altar friends were knocking over the altar, and altar cloths from it, and otherwise ransackin church. Bob was screaming that he w lawyer. His assorted friends, some i! desk l in various parts of the squadroom, I! already in the detention cage the corner room, parroted every word he said. Bobby lawyer, they wan a lawyer. He yelled father, they yelled for their fathers. It was an here in the squadroom, with everyone in fine Carella wished he had e plugs.

When Vincent Corrente arrived at the sq at four P.M. that afternoon, looked much as he the day Carella talked to him, except thai he was wearing a tank top undershirt. Or, if he was, it not visible under t Hawaiian print, sports shirt he wore hanging outside his tan .wise, was still jowly and paunchy and and he was still smoking an E1 Ropo cigar lent a distinctive olfactory dimension to the squadroom medley yelling teenagers, typewriters, ringing telephones, and cops everyon shut the fuck up. Corrente was It was difficult to tell, however, whether he angrier with his son or with the people who'd him.

"You dumb bastard," he told Bobby, "wha'd you to the church, hah?" a belted him upside the :head. To Carella, he shouted, "You! Take thes cuffs offa my son or you're in deep shit!"

Carella looked at him calmly.

"You hear me? I know people!" Corrente shouted.

"Mr. Corrente," Carella said, "your son has been charged with..."

"I don't care what he's been charged with, he's a juvenile!"

"He's been charged as an adult."

"He's only seventeen!"

"That's an adult, Mr. Corrente. And he's been charged with..."

"I want a lawyer!" Bobby shouted.

"Shut up, you dumb bastard!" Corrente said. To Carella, he said, "He don't say anything till my lawyer gets here."

"Fine," Carella said calmly.

He was wondering when Bobby down off his high.

The lawyer Corrente called was a man I'll Dominick Abruzzi.

This was getting to be a regular reuni WOPS, the World Order for the Prew Subterfuge, a watchdog society dedicated proposition that any American born with an name must keep that name forever, neither it completely, nor even Anglicizing it, lest mercilessly and eternally hounded to his grave reminders that he is merely an ignorant hoity-toity pretensions. Abruzzi looked as Richard Nixon. Carella guessed his te capped.

Thirty-five, thirty-six years old, tailored suit, a button-down shirt, and a somber he breezed into the squadroom as if he'd been (or one similar to it) a thousand times before. hello to Corrente, waved to Bobby who seemed sinking lower and lower into a depressive mire, the asked, pleasantly enough, "What seems to the trouble here?" Carella him what the trouble seemed to The trouble seemed to be First-Degree Second-Degree Burglary, First-Degree Mischief, and Reckless Endangerment o f, Proper "That's what the trouble seems to be, he said "Well, that's, your contention, Detective," .zzi said.

Carella was aware of the sense in which Abruzzi using the word "Detective." His intonation

it sound like "Pig."

"No, that's not my contention, Counselor," he "that's what Robert Corrente's been charged "

He did not like attorneys who defended criminals. especially did not like Italianamerican ys who defended criminals, especially when look like Richard Nixon and smelled of snake and especially when the crim was himself an Italianamerican.

Abruzzi was aware of the sense in which Carella was using the word "Counselor." His intonation it sound like "Shyster." Abruzzi hated h mighty Italian-American Law Enforcement Officers who thought their calling was as pure and exalted as a priest's. In a democracy, every was entitled to counsel and everyone was innocent until he was prove guilty, and Abruzzi was here to make certain that no American citize would ever be deprived of his fights, God bless America.

"If you don't mind, Detective," he said, "I'd like to talk to my cli and his father privately." "Sure," Carella said. "Go right ahead.

Counselor."

A uniformed cop escorted Abruzzi and the Correntes down the hall to Interrogation Room.

Carella went to the cage, threw back the opened the door, and said, at a time, son. Want to step outside, please?" The eighteen and look fifteen. Dark hair, wide eyes, a pretty mouth. Like Bobby, he had come from the high induced by whatever the hell ingested and now looked as if he'd been run a railroad locomotive. Carella took him over desk. He was coming from the Clerical with a cup of tea; he liked his afternoon tea.

"What's your name, son?" Carella asked "Rudy Perucci," the kid said.

"Rudy, you're in trouble," Carella said, him his rights. Rudy listened gravely. Carella told him if he'd understood everything he'd said he had. Carella asked him if he wanted an attorney.

"Do I need one?" Rudy asked.

"I'm not permitted to advise you on that," said. "You can have one or not, it's entirely you. Either way, it won't reflect upon your innocence." "It wasn't me who hit the priest," Rudy said.

"Rudy, before you say anything else, I know whether you want an attorney. If you want you can have one. Either your own, or we're by to get one for you if you don't have one. please tell me now if you want an attorney."

"What else do they say I done?" Rudy Carella read off the list of charges.

"That's serious, huh?" Rudy said.

Carella started to tell him exactly how serious it was. The assault charge was punishable by a maximum of The burglary charge... "We didn't steal anything," Rudy said.

"Rudy, please don't say anything else, okay?" Carella said. "Let me tell you what these charges are and then you can decide about a lawyer. You get ten for the assault, fifteen for up to five years burglary, twenty-five for the reckless endangerment, and seven for the criminal mischief."

"I only, went along," Rudy said. "I didn't do anything."

"Do you want a lawyer, Rudy?"

"If I didn't do anything, why do I need a lawyer?"

"Yes or no, Rudy?"

"No, I don't need a lawyer."

"Are you willing to answer questions without a lawyer present?"

"Yes. I don't need a lawyer, I didn't do anything."

"Can you tell me what happened?" "I only went along," Rudy said.

"How did it start?"

"We were trying some stuff Bobby got hold of."

"What stuff?. What'd you take, Rudy?"

"I don't even know the name of it. We just said yes."

He grinned. He had just made a joke about Nancy Reagan's famous and foolish slogan. Anybody who'd ever smoked only so much as a joint knew exactly how stupid the Just Say No campaign had been. Rudy was testing Car now. He knew how dumb it had been. Carella smiled. Two old buddies familiar with the ways of abuse. But only one of them had gone berserk in church.

"It was real good, man," Rudy said, still Carella was willing to bet had been real "So what happened?" he asked pleasantly.

"Bobby wanted to go get his stuff back."

"What stuff?."

"The stuff the nigger ripped off."

"Ripped off?."

"Yeah, you know."

"No, I don't know. Tell me."

This is the fifth episode of Rashomon.

there will be no more installments. This is the chapter. At least Carella hopes it is the final They are back to Easter Sunday again, windy, shitty day, everyone seems to agree weather. And it is still two-thirty, three o'clock afternoon, everyone agrees on the time as well. the star player, or at least one of the star this tedious and interminable little me once again coming up Eleventh Street, doing R calls his Nigger Shuffle, and grinning into wind like he owns the world Alexis has not anything about this part of the saga because she not witness to it, but so far Hooper's, Bobby's, Seronia's versions are in agreement. But they to the dope part again, which dope Hooper first there to sell, and next there to buy, and next off with after Bobby accused him of using funny the last time they traded. And, sure enough are going into the hallway again, and another dope transaction is about to go down, these two Bobby and Hooper- • are in the habit of exchanging money for dope, you see, and vice versa, Mrs. Reagan, which is why little girls in red hoods should not go wandering off into the woods where evil and corruption lurk, hmmm?

So there in the hallway, out comes the crack. A hundred vials, identical to the tiny glass tubes perfume samples come in, except that these vials don't contain Eau du Printemps. These vials contain little crystals look like exaggerated grains of salt but which are actually cocaine base, which is made by heating a mixture of baking soda, cocaine hydrochloride and water, and then letting it cool.

These little vials are deadly.

Out comes the crack... "And out comes the piece," Rudy said. "The whole

"The piece."

"A gun?"

"A gun."

"Bobby pulled a gun?"

"No, no. The nigger pulled the gun.

... because what he has in mind, you see, is taking these hundred vi worth four hundred bucks and not giving Bobby a red cent for them. T the piece is for. Which upon closer looks like a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson Re Police Model 33, capable of putting very lar in anyone's h who is stupid enough grabbing that plastic bag of crack away Hooper. Unless the someone is standing a little side of and slightly behind nigger, and there's a baseball bat (and also a softball and a but it only the bat that is of importance) corner of the hallway, where one the kids when his mother called him upstairs to The bat is propped against the wall, and the the softball are on the floor, the ball in the mitt (although this is an insignificant detail)!: the kid standi slightly behind and to the le Hooper is not Bobby Corrente but his k bro Frankie Corrente, who is rapidly learning the of the street, and especially how to seize opportunity.

Not to mention the handle of a ball bat.

Which he does, in fact, seize.

And swings the bat with practiced ease target that is Nathan Hooper' head. From the of his eye, Hooper sees the bat coming, and he of rai his left shoulder, sort of hunkering into it, turning at the same ti trying to deflect blow, which he partially succeeds in doing in that hits his shoulder first and only then bounces to graze his head. Thi not enough to .,rious wound, but it is enough to prevent ;sion and possible coma. It is also enough to his grip on the gun to loosen be he can fire shot. And as the gun clatters to the floor and young pul back the bat for yet another swing at fences, Hooper recognizes it i time to get the out of here, but not without the dope for which he h now paid with a broken head. So off he goes with the bag of dope in left hand and the pack in full cry behind him, and the rest of the s ends in church not once, but twice.

"The second time is today," Rudy said. "When we went back to look fo the stuff."

Because, yes, Virginia, it is true that Hooper stashed the dope someplace inside the church.

Bobby and his pals know this is so. Not because when he came out wit the priest on the way to the hospital, they couldn't see the bag of crack nowhere in sight; he could've had it in his pocket, right? But

because pretty soon after the incident on Easter, Hooper began bragg around Fifth Street that as soon as it was safe to go back to St. Ka he was gonna be one rich nigger. And also, this must've been three, days before the priest got killed, they were fooling around with a p kid named Fat Harold, kidding around with him, you know, giving him knucks and the burn, this was near the school, .and he told them he with Hooper when he called the church and warned the priest he wante his dope back.

So the dope is there inside the church, ri Someplace inside the chur
Four hundred dollars worth of crack.

And there hasn't been a single snooping around looking for it becaus there aren't any blacks go to St. Catherine' second of all, they kno what happened to on Easter, and they don't want a taste of medicine.

This doesn't mean Bobby and the guys been in there tiptoeing around a dozen looking for it, but they can't find the fucking the nigger h it too good. So it's beginning to like four hundred bucks is going straight dow toilet.

Until today.

Today, Bobby gets sore.

And he tells them they''re going to that churc they're gonna turn it upside down till they findi fuckin' dope.

Whichis what they done.

"But not me," Rudy said. "I just went alonl didn't hit the priest, I didn't knock over any of things, the candlesticks, the altars, the t with incense, I didn't do any of those things. And, a how is it burg if nobody stole nothing?" Carella explained that it was burglary if knowingly entered or remained unlawfully building with intent to com a crime.

"But we didn't go there to commit a crime," Ru "We went there lookin for dope rightfully

to Bobby." Carella explained that criminal mischief was a

And so was assault. And so was reckless "rment.

Rudy shook his head over the inequity of the law.

"Good thing I didn't do none of those things," he "Who did?" Carella asked.

The entire reason for this little exercise. Get one of them talking, get him to nail one of the others.

get another one talking to save his own skin, have him nail yet another one. The Domino

ry of law enforcement and criminal investigation.

"I just went along," Rudy said.

"Too bad you've been charged," Carella said sympathetically. "But you get a thing like this, a bunch of guys acting in concert..." He shook his own head over the inequity of the law.

"I don't see why I should take the rap for something I didn't do," Rudy said, beginning to sound a bit indignant.

"Yeah, it's too bad," Carella said. "But if you didn't see who knock over the altar, for example, or who hit the priest..."

"Bobby hit the priest."

"Bobby Corrente?"

"Yeah. I saw him grab the candlestick and hit him with it. And Jimmy Fava knocked over the big one. And..."

And that was the beginning.

When Dominick Abruzzi came back to the squadroom after having talked to his client, he said, "May I have a word with you, Detective?" No more sneering at the word "Detective." "Sure," Carella said.

"My client went into the church because he was having an allergy attack," Abruzzi said. Carella looked at him.

"Lots of pollen in the air this time of year. The church is relatively pollen free. It was a him." "I'm sure," Carella said. "Dust free, probably"

Abruzzi looked at him.

"The wagon gets here at six," Carella said. "That, you can talk to your client downtown. Tonight, Mr. Abruzzi," he said, and went to the lieutenant's door and knocked on it.

"Come!" Bymes shouted.

in this church, here in this hallowed place, O Lord who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, searching now behind a life-sized plaster statue

of the Virgin Mary holding the crucified Christ in her arms, here in this place, on his hands and knees but not praying, lifting altar candles instead and looking under them, groping along stone walls inch by inch inspecting niches in which there were statues of saints he did not recognize or could not remember, Carella was transported back to a time when a young boy who looked somewhat like the man he'd grown into, sat in a church not too far away from this one. The family had not yet moved uptown to Riverhead --
- sat Sunday after Sunday listening to the drone of ritual, barely able to keep his eyes open.

Sunday after Sunday.

He was inside a church again today, seeking not salvation but dope. Because Lieutenant Byrnes had told him to find that dope. Because if there was dope inside the church, then the black girl was telling the truth about her brother stashing it there and Hennessy was telling the truth about so calling up and wanting it back, and the existed that Corrente or somebody else had back for it sometime before this afternoon. That was the case, then maybe the somebodies who'd come looking for it had run into the instead. And such a chance encounter called for a great many possibilities, least of which violence. Where there was dope, the [murder always existed. So find the goddamn and at least maybe you have your goddamn Sunday after Sunday.

Sundays with sunshine blazing through the high windows on either side the illuminating stained glass that had been a local artisan here in this Italian section of the (which was no Firenze, that was certain) dust climbing to the ceiling while from the organ loft fat notes floated out onto the scintillated air, boy with slanting eyes and unruly hair listened to priest and wondered what it was all about.

On the day of his first holy communion was ten or eleven, somewhere there a life was so alien to him now that he could no longer remember the exact dates of the most events in a young Catholic's life his slicked down cowlick at the back of his head, walked to the church with her and his father and Uncle Lou, all so long ago.

Carella he was called Stevie back then, a name he'd always sort of liked until a girl a few years later liked him Stevie-Weevie in an attempt to make feel childish; he was twelve and she was a vast difference at that age, he'd gone in tears. But on the day of his first holy Stevie Car accepted the wafer on his altar allowed it to melt there, careful not to bite it. Cause this was the flesh and the blood of Jesus and the wafer would bleed in his mouth, blood would flow in his mouth, or so he'd given understand by one of the nuns who'd taught him his catechism every Monday and on afternoons after school.

He'd felt a deep and reverent attachment to God that day. He did not

know exactly what it was he believed, it was all mumbo-jumbo of a sort to him, but he knew that he felt an inner glow when that wafer dissolved in his mouth, and he knelt there at the altar railing with his head and his cowlick plastered down, and he felt somehow enriched by what happened this day, so very long ago.

Enriched. And somehow joyous. He'd gone to his first confession the before, nothing to confess at that age, he truly was without sin, an innocent... Well... I lied, Father, and I ate meat on Friday, and I talked back to my mother. Sins. A boy's sins. forgiven, absolved with handful of Hail Marys, a couple of Our Fathers, and an Act again, the lamb again, joyous in the presence, on the following day, the Sunday his communion. '

A year or so later, two years, so remember now, he was confirmed in church, wearing the same blue suit, which beginning to outgrow, red ribbon on his his Uncle Lou looking tall and handsome in suit that matched his own, neatly mustache, his father gave him a gold signet his new initial on it, L for Louis, in honor godfather, SLC for Step Louis Carella, am a man. Sunday after Sunday in that then in the small church in Riverhead, three from the house his parents were renting, own bedroom, he was a man now, he no shared bedroom with his sister

Angela.

called him Stevie anymore. He was Steve Sunday after Sunday.

Rainy Sundays in the new church, slithering down the windows, plain glass Riverhead, he missed the stained glass they'd Isola, the priest's sonorous voice floating out the heads of the worshippers, the scent wafting from thuribles, a lightning flash, the thunder, the scent of something else now, or real, the perfume of young girls, its scent headier than the incense, he was beginning to mind wandered, he thought of panties when he would have been thinking of God.

Years later, on the Saturday before Easter he still have been fifteen or sixteen, he could hardly tuber anymore he was infused with the same

spiritual fervor he'd felt on that day of his first, and he'd got on his bicycle, a black and white Schwinn with a battery-powered horn, and pedaled over to the church, and locked the bike the wrought-iron fence outside... His father used to tell stories about the days when didn't even have to lock your front door, but that when there were chariots the streets...

... and he took off his hat... He used to wear this shabby blue baseball cap that seen better days, but it was the good luck hat worn

when he pitched a no-hitter... and he went into the church and dipped his into the font of holy water and made the sign of cross, and then down and waited his turn to enter the confession box. And he knelt on the padded kneeling bar, and the little door slid open and he could vaguely see the priest's face behind the screen partition, and he crossed himself and said, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned, this six months since my last confession."

There was a silence behind the screen.

Carella waited.

And then the priest said, "And you pick the busiest time of the year come?"

Carella confessed his sins. He had done bad things that had kept him away from the for six months because he'd been afraid of those things a priest, evil things like Irish girl named Marge Gannon, and masturbate little.., well, a lot.., and saying Fuck you, dirty bastard. The priest told him what he had as penance, and Carella said, "Thank you, and I the confession box, and was starting the center aisle toward the altar fully say the penance so that tomorrow he could communion and feel the same glow he'd first time, when all at once he stopped dead middle of the aisle, and he thought What mean, the busiest time of the year? The busiest times of the year? I was feeling good came in here, I wanted be near God! So hell do you mean he actually thought those what the hell, here in the church, standing middle of the aisle halfway to the altar hell do you mean, the busiest time of the year?

And he turned his back to the altar, and the aisle, and out of the church, and he lucky baseball cap down on his head, unchained his bike and rode away from the without looking back at it. He had not been in church again until his sister's wedding eleven ago.

He was in one today.

Looking for dope.

Father Michael had searched the church and undoubtedly he'd known its nooks crannies more completely than any outsider would have. And Carella had searched it again with and Bobby Corrente and his friends had done their more reckless search,, and no one had come with the hundred via of crack. So maybe the wasn't here, after all, maybe all the versions of Rashomon were false. And even if the crack was here, what were we talking about? Five hundred dollars? That was the street value of the crack Nathan Hooper allegedly had stashed inside St.

Catherine's. A lousy five hundred dollars. Was that enough to kill someone for? In this city, yes. In this city five hundred pistachio

was enough to kill someone for. And if someone had come to this church to retrieve that dope... And had been intercepted by Father Michael. Perhaps challenged by him...

Yes, it was possible. The lieutenant was right.

Where there was dope, there was often murder.

Sighing heavily, he started the search one more time.

From the top.

Playing his own Rashomon tune.

Imagining himself as Nathan Hooper entering this church on Easter Sunday with the pack in full cry behind him.

Through the massive center doors. Urn of holy Water on the left. Stainless steel, sitting on a black wrought-iron stand. Little upright brass fastened to the top of its lid. Little brass spigot container below. He pressed the button on the A drop of water fell onto the fingers of his hand. He could remember back to a time when fonts of water in a church were filled to every day of the week. Now, they were empty on Sundays. The urn was simpler. It held... three gallons of water? You didn't have to go around the church filling all those little basins time.

To the right of the entrance doors was containing religious reading matter. New: rifled National Catholic Register and Our Visitor and Catholic Twin Circles. Pamphlets titles like Serving God's People with Be, Your Will and Students Pursue the Infinite Will of God and Proclamation: Aids for Lessons of the Church Year, this particular subtitled Lent. The rack was fashioned of wood troughlike partitions holding the printed had felt inside those troughs, searching newspaper when he'd gone through the with Hawes. He did it again now. Nothing.

The offerings box stood alongside the rack; one was expected to make donations reading material. There were twenty-two of boxes scattered throughout the church; he counted them on his earlier search. Each resembled nothing so much as a black iron a black iron tower growing out of it. The box as a foot square, with a heavy padlock fastened to front, where the box opened. The tower sprang from the center of the box, rising to about Carrel's buckle. It was a three-inch-square chute with a slit in the top of it. The slit was perhaps three inches and half an inch wide. Big enough to accept a wadded bill.

Or a vial of crack.

But wouldn't Father Michael have emptied all the boxes in the church since Easter Sunday? And even if Hooper had dropped a dozen vials he and there in offerings boxes around the church...

But this would have taken time.

He was being chased by an angry mob.

But, hold it. Rashomon, okay?

He comes running into the church, carrying his plastic bag with his precious hundred vials in it. The vials are identical to the ones perfume samples come in. In fact, most crack dealers get their vials from wholesale specialty houses. The sale of these tiny containers has skyrocketed since crack came into vogue. If you checked the books of these houses, you'd think half the population of this city had suddenly gone into the perfume business. Little perfume tubes containing the crack crystals, most of them white, some of them with a yellowish tint. Little clear crystals looking as if they've been chipped from a large rock, it is sometimes called rock because of its appearance. White or yellow, when

you smoke the shit, when you melt it and vapors, it produces an immediate high that takes the top of your head off. So he's carrying his vials of crack in a small plastic bag... They'd have fit in a small bag.

They're what, those vials? An inch long? of an inch in diameter? Little plastic cap top of the vial, well, just like the perfume vials, those are what these deadly little containers are. So yes, they were small enough to fit inside the smallest of the commercial plastic bags, one of sandwich-sized

things and yes, practically the thing he'd have seen when he came running into the church would have been the offerings box black conning tower wouldn't have taken; more than a few minutes to dump those vials sloshing out the top of the tower, turn over the bag of funnel them in, using the edge of his free hand or a shovel, it was possible. Two, three minutes at the most. If he had three minutes. With all of roaring up behind him?

But suppose he'd been too frightened to go there in the entrance narthex? Suppose he'd run the church instead... Carella stepped through the door into the ... and was suddenly confronted with a feast of offerings boxes. There were shrines right and to his left... Dedicated to the Reverend... there were more statues of saints, were marble altars with goldleaf screens above were standing racks holding votive candles and were racks fastened to the wall and holding yet votive candles, and everywhere the candles there was an offerings box. Nathan Hooper to see what Carella was seeing now.

everywhere. Candles and flowers. The ones of the cross starting on the

north wall of the to the right of the altar... Jesus is condemned , death... Jesus is made to bear His cross... Jesus is to the cross ..

Carella walking up the side aisle now... ... a stained glass window an air-conditioner it.

He passed his fingers over the evaporating fins.

ut an inch of space between each fin. Had oper dropped his vials int one of the ditioners set under windows everywhere the church? But he being chased! He have time to look, to find, to... More candles agai the wall.

And another offerings box.

Maybe Fames had been right about the good priest's obsession with th tithe.

Jesus falls the First time under His cross... And more candles.

And an offerings box.

And a shrine with a statue of Jesus with his open revealed in his ch radiating gold-
leaf rays, fresh flowers under the statue. And votive
candles.

an offerings box.

Jesus meets His afflicted Mother... A candle rack fastened to the st wall metal lip at its topmost edge, forming a angle with the wall. H felt behind the lip.

Double rows of candles flickering.

Where? he thought.

There were niches all over the church, little insets in the stone, a of them statues.

He felt behind each statue for the third fingers widespread, searchi Nothing.

Niches everywhere.

He passed a font designed for bearing holy little steel basin sittin a stone cavity. He empty basin. It fit the cavity exactly, there was millimeter of an inch to spare. No place to hide here, and besides i would have contained Easter Sunday, Hooper was being wouldn't have h time to... Hey.

Hey, wait a minute.

Wait a holy goddamn minute!

He came running up the righthand side church, passing the stations of the cross in order... Jesus is placed in the sepulchre... ... running past the arched doorway that led sacristy and the rectory beyond... Jesus is taken down from the cross... ... passed another little shrine with a statue of yet another saint, flowers at his feet... Jesus dies on the cross... ... opened the center inner doors, and stepped into entrance lobby, and turned instantly to his right.

Because if the offerings box with its black tower one of the first things Hooper had seen immediately upon entering the church, then the one he'd have seen, had to have seen, was the urn of holy water.

Stainless steel, sitting on a black wrought-iron stand. Little upright brass cross fastened to the top of its lid. Little brass spigot on the container below. He did not know how often this urn was refilled. But it looked too heavy to be carried to a water tap, and he was willing to bet it was regularly filled right here on the spot. Which, if true, meant that someone would simply lift the lid and pour water into the urn. He took off his jacket, unbuttoned the right-hand sleeve of his shirt, shoved the sleeve up to his elbow, and with his left hand, reached for the brass cross fastened to the urn's lid. Virtually holding his breath, he lifted the lid and reached into the water with his free hand. Felt around. And... There.

He lifted the plastic bag dripping out of the water.

It was sealed with one of those little yellow plastic ties.

He loosened it.

Kneeling, he shook the contents of the bag onto the stone floor. The bag wasn't waterproof, the first thing that spilled out onto the floor was a small amount of water. The vials came next. He could tell at once that the water had some of them as well, partially dissolving the crystals, melting others entirely. But, the residue remained looked a hell of a lot like crack.

It occurred to him that if the urn had been here since Easter Sunday... And if Father Michael had blessed the water between then and the time of his death... Then the crack was holy, too.

Which, in a way, in America today, it was.

It began raining again later that evening, Willis was heading cross

to a shop Castillo de Palacios. He was going there nobody at 1147 Hillsdale knew anyone Carlos Ortega. This was the address Orte given Parole Board when he was released prison in October of last year. If there was address, the Department of Corrections was of it. Trying to find a Carlos Ortega in a city locked up eighty-three of them in the last little was akin to finding a pork roast in the state of El Castillo de Palacios would have ungrammatical in Spanish if the Palacios been person's name, which in this case it

be. Palacio meant "palace" in Spanish, and lacios meant "palaces" and when you had a plural un, the article and noun were supposed to unli English where everything was so put together. El Castillo de los Palacios have been the proper Spanish for "The Castle the Palaces," since Francisco Palacios was a El Castillo de Palacios was, in fact, correct though it translated as "Palacios's Castle," and on words howe you sliced it, English or anish.

Francisco Palacios was a good-looking man with ., an-living habits (now that he'd served three Istate on a burglary rap) who owned and opera pleasant little store that sold medicinal herbs, books, religious statues, numbers books, tarot cards, and the like. His silent partne were named Gaucho Palacios and Cowboy Palacios, and they ran a store behind the other store, and this one offered for such medically appr "marital aids" as dildos, French ticklers, open crotch panties (brag sin entrepierna), plastic vibrators (eight-inch and ten-inch in the white, twelve-inch in the black) leather executioner's masks, chastity belts, whips With leather thongs, leather anklets studded with chrom penis extenders, aphrodisiacs, inflatable life-sized female dolls, condoms in every color of the rainbow including puce, books on how to hypnotize and otherwise overcome reluctant women, ben-wa balls in both plastic and gold plate, and a highly popular mechanical device guaranteed to satisfaction and imaginatively called Suc-u-i Selling these things in this city was not ille Gaucho and the Cowboy were breaking This was not why they ran their store store owned and opera by Francisco. did so out of a sense of responsibility to the Rican community of which they were a did not, for example, want a little o lady in shawl to wander into their backstore shop dead away at the s of playing cards men, women, police dogs and midgets in marital-aid positions, fifty-four if you counte jokers. Both the Gaucho and the Cowbo' community pride to match that of Francisco Francisco, the Gau and the Cowboy fact, all one and the same person, and they collectiv a police informer.

Naturally, the police had something on in any one of his incarnation nobody hardly anybody becomes a snitch merely he believes he will be performing a service while simultaneously enjoying a romantic advent

What they had on Palacios a small tax-fraud violation that would have sent him to a federal prison for a good many years had chosen to exercise their option to arrest Palacios cheerfully accepted the grip the police put over him, and tried to lead an exemplary life. Now and then he did a little something illegal like hot CD players along with his dildos and , -dads he figured there wasn't much more he could lose. With a federal rap hanging over his head, else seemed minor.

Willis went to him not because he was a better than Fats Donner ... actually Donner had a slight edge when it came to providing quality information ... but only because over the years penchant for young girls had become more more unbearable; being in the same room with was like inhaling a mix of baby powder and spermicidal gel. The Cowboy was actually pleasant to be with. Moreover, Carlos Ortega was of Hispanic origin, and so was the Cowboy, whose shop was in a section of the Eight-Seven known as El Infierno, which until the recent influx of Jamaicans, Koreans and Vietnamese had been almost exclusively Puerto Rican.

He was combing his hair when Willis, soaking wet after a two-block run from the bus stop, came into the back of the shop. High pompadour, the way kids used to wear it back in the Fifties. Dark brown eyes. Martin Luther King teeth. It was rumored in The Inferno that Palacios had three wives which was also against the law, but they already had him on the tax fraud. One of the wives was supposed to have been a movie star in Cuba before Castro took over.

That had to put her in her fifties or sixties, Willis guessed. He got straight to the point.

"Carlos Ortega," he said.

"Gimme a break," Palacios said. "You in here with Spanish names that sound like 'Forty-two years old, ugly as homemade 'What'd he do?'"

"Nothing that we know of right now, not where he's supposed to be."

"Where's that?" "1147 Hillside." "Tough neighborhood," Palacios said in sort of comical in that he lived in an area that had racked up three deaths beginning of the year.

"He was busted on a drug charge," Willis "Did good time, got paroled in October. He's very ugly, Cowboy, that might be where you "If I had a nickel for everybody's ugly city..."

"Big bald guy, knife scar over his nose partially closing. " "Popeye Ortega," Palacios said.

Which is the way it went sometimes.

The one thing Palacios forgot to tell him was was a crack house.

"Here's where you'll find him," he said, and him an address and an apartment number. If had known where he was going, he "might realize that the twelve-year-old kid standi outside the building was a lookout. As it was

ast him as innocent as the day is long, which maybe why the kid didn challenge him. Or be it was because he didn't look at all like a cop

Five-eight, slender and slight, wearing a sports shirt ;n at the throat, sleeves rolled up to his elbows, blue slacks, and scuffed loafers, h could have been anyone who lived here in a housing development where blacks, whites, Hispanics and Asians lived side by side in a volatili mix. The twelve-year-old scarcely gave him a passing glance.

Still all unaware, Willis went into the lobby and took the elevator to the third floor. Apartment 37, Palacios had told him. Ask for Pop A kid of about sixteen or seventeen was lounging against the wall opposite the elevator doors. The moment Willis stepped out into the third floor corridor, he said, "You looking for something?" Big husk white kid wearing a T-shirt and jeans. The shirt had the call letters of a rock radio station on it. You looking for something? And all at on the twelve-year-old downstairs registered and Willis realized that the Cowboy had sent him to a crack house.

"I'm supposed to meet Popeye Ortega," he said.

The kid nodded.

"You know the apartment number?"

"Yes," Willis said. "Thirty-seven."

"End of the hall," the kid said, and stepped out of his way.

He did not want to go in here as a cop. If he flashed the tin, the r would come down around his ears. But passing the scrutiny of a twelve outside and a sixteen-year-old here in the was not quite the same thing as slipping through enemy lines. He thought at once should split, pu the joint under surveillance, back another time with a hit team. But Popeye Ortega. i He went to the door of apartment 37, it.

A peephole opened.

"I'm supposed to meet Popeye Ortega," he said. If it worked once, he figured it might work. It did. The door opened. The man standing was a big, good-looking black man who had a job playing the sidekick cop on a police show. The first thing he said was, "Have I seen you before?"

"No," Willis said.

"I didn't think so." "Popeye told me to meet him here."

"He's upstairs. What can I get you?"

"Nothing right now," Willis said.

The man looked at him.

"I'll just go talk to him," Willis said, and past him into the apartment. Kitchen on the left, a dead ahead, in what would have been the room, three young men sat at a table. One black, one white, one Hispanic. Crack pipes on the table. Butane torch. Butane fuel. Crack vials. Cream-colored rocks in a vial, cost you five and in L.A., fifteen in D.C., the nation's capital. Good for an instant high that lasted up to thirty minutes. Then you were back in the again till your next hit.

On the Coast, they called it rock. In D.C., they called it Piece of the Mountain. In this city, there were a dozen different names for it. You made the stuff in your own kitchen. You mixed cocaine powder in a pot with baking soda and you stirred it till you had a thick paste. Then you cooked the paste on your stove and you let it dry out until it resembled a round bar of soap. You broke it into chips. Another name for it. Crack. If you were a roller, you packaged it and sold it under your own brand name. If you used made from coke powder that had already been cut with some deadly shit like ephedrine or amphetamine, you could end up in morgue.

Users like to know what they were smoking. They looked for brand names they could count on. Lucky Eleven. Or Mister J. Or Royal Flush. Or Paradise. Or Tease Me.

Actually, you didn't smoke the stuff, you inhaled it.

Although you could crunch up the rocks, and sprinkle them inside a marijuana cigarette. You called this "whoolie," the pot laced with crack, and it was one way you could actually smoke the product.

But you didn't normally burn it the way you burned tobacco or pot.

Normally, you melted it.

The three young men at the table were going.

They were each holding a glass pipe. This resembled a real pipe the way the glass slipper

resembled a real slipper. The "pipe" was fast of a clear glass bowl with two glass tubes from it on opposite sides at right angles to each other, one vertical, one horizontal. It looked more laboratory instrument than smoking. You expected to see it over a Bunsen burner, some mad scientist's evil brew boiling in bowl was about the size of a tennis ball, and it hole in it through which water could be poured.

glass tube was about five inches long, diameter of half an inch or so. You wedged rocks each rock weighed about a milligram into the top of the vertical glass which after very few uses became blackened, you put the horizontal glass tube in your mouth, you picked up the butane torch... "Beam me up, Scotty," one of the young said.

Intent on what they were doing now.

flame into the tube. The rocks beginning to suck the vapors through the water in the pipe. Up through the other glass tube, lips around inhale the vapors, a five-second from the lungs to the brain, and whammo!

The equivalent of an orgasm, most addicts said.

Rapture.

Euphoria.

In laboratory tests, rats ignored electric shocks to eat their cocaine doses, chose cocaine over food, sex over sex, allowed it to dictate the very course their lives. By the end of a month, nine out of ten were dead.

Willis watched the young men sucking up death.

The crack house was in actuality three separate apartments on the second, third and fourth floors of building. The floor and ceiling of the third-floor apartment had been broken through and ladders set to allow access to the second floor below and the floor above. There were entrances on each floor, of course, but anyone wanting to come in and smoke away their time had to come in on the third floor, where he paid his money for a vial and his pipe. The three-level arrangement also served a more practical purpose. In the event of a raid, the second and fourth floors could be emptied in a flash while the cops milled about on the entrance

floor of the dope sandwich.

He found Popeye Ortega on the fourth floor.

He was sitting at a table in the far corner of the second bedroom, looking through a rain-lashed window, at least a dozen empty vials of crack spread on the table top before him. Willis did not know how long he'd been here. He looked as if he had not changed his clothes or showered in days, and he smelled of the stench of his own urine. He kept staring through the window at the rain outside, as if viewing somewhere in the streaked greyness and images mere mortals could not see.

"Ortega?" Willis said.

"Scotty got the chip, man," he said.

He was, in truth, as ugly as Marilyn had described him, as ugly as his picture and/or his the Buenos Aires documents and the I.S.

But there was something missing here.

Willis stepped out of the room, opened the door in the hallway, and allowed the cool, clean fresh rain to sweep into the apartment. He waited until Ortega came down from his high, he would question him. But he already certain that the man sitting in there, staring window and stinking of his own piss, could be the same man who was threatening what was missing in this man was the Marilyn had described. The huge ugly man in had long ago lost all sense of direction, drive. Crack had stolen his life force. No effect, already dead.

Willis took a cigarette from the package in pocket, lighted it, and stood by the window on it, looking out at the rain, wondering how long he would be before Ortega surfaced. He could hear voices from downstairs welling up the hole had been cut in the ceiling. The good-looking man greeting a customer. Willis figured that he was here, and just so it shouldn't total he might as well ruffle a few feathers. He went up the ladder again to the third floor. He walked past the young men sitting at the table. There had been by a fourth man, who was at that very moment up. This has to be China in the 1800s, Willis thought. This has to be a nation of drug addicts. This has to be the disgrace of the planet. This has to be a America that makes you ashamed.

The good-looking black man was sitting at a table in the kitchen.

Willis walked in with his gun in one hand and his shield in the other.

"What's this?" the black man said. "What do you think it is?" Willis asked.

"Hey, come on, man."

"Meaning what?"

"Meaning you know."

"No, I don't know. Tell me."

"Come on, man."

Meaning, of course, that the fix was in. As simple as that. Hey, come on, man, this has been taken care of, huh? Go talk to your people, or they tell you let it slide, huh, man? With the numbers involved in the drug trade, there would always be somebody letting it slide, somebody looking the other way.

"What's your name?" Willis asked.

"Come on, man."

"What's your fucking name?"

"Warren Jackson."

"Mind if I use your phone, Warren?"

"You steppin' in deep shit, man."

"Wait'll you see what you're steppin' in," said, and yanked the phone from the wall dialed the precinct number. Charlie-car showed five minutes. The driver looked surprised. So man tiding shotgun. Both of them knew Willi..

"Gee, Hal," one of them said, "when did thi spring up?"

"Surprises every day of the week," Willis Warren Jackson was scowling both Charlie-car cops. Willis figured they were both the deal. Partners. Helping Young America its fucking brains out.

"More detectives on the way " he conversationally.

"Good," the shotgun cop said.

"You know Detective Meyer? He's on the "Oh, sure," the driver said.
"Meyer Meyer. bald guy, right?"

"Right. He's got young kids."

Both cops looked at him.

"He has a thing about crack," Willis said, pleasantly.

So far Warren Jackson wasn't saying He was possibly waiting for some to tell to fuck off. But nobody was doing it. Not yet. young crack addicts sitting around the table something was going on, but they were so far out! it, so high up on the third moon of the planet the galax Romitar that they figured maybe guys in blue uniforms were the palace standing there with the big black eunuch and the short curly-haired jester, all of them guarding the Emperor Pleth's harem, this was a good movie.

"Where's your sergeant?" Warren said at last.

This was Charlie Sector, the Patrol Sergeant's name was Mickey Harrigan a big redheaded red-faced hairbag who'd been on the force since Hector was a pup. It was entirely possible that Harrigan was in on it, too. Maybe every cop in the sector was in on it, including the CPEP cops the beat.

"Call your fuckin' sergeant," Warren said, "tell him. we got a misunderstanding here."

The Charlie-car cops looked at each other. They were trying to figure what the protocol was here.

They knew their Patrol Sergeant outranked Willis, but if it came to matter for Internal Affairs, rank didn't mean a goddamn thing. Unless Willis himself was in on the deal. In which case... "Sure, call him," Willis said.

They figured he wasn't in on the deal.

"Go ahead," Willis said.

The shotgun cop's name was Larry Fitzhenry. He raised Harrigan on the walkie-talkie and asked him could he please, Sarge, stop by this apartment here on Ainsley and Fifth, apartment 37, Sarge, where there seems to be some sort of misunderstanding here? Harrigan said he'd be right over. His voice sounded noncommittal. Over the years, Willis had learned that you should never trust anyone Mickey unless his last name was Mouse.

Meyer got there before Harrigan did.

He did not like what he saw. Willis took him and told him he thought proprietor was blowing the whistle. He figured some uniforms about to be

the fan, at least one of them dec with a gold shield. Meyer looked e
annoyed. The Charlie-
car cops looked nervous. Warren Jackson was getting
angrier over the untrustworthiness of the department.

When Harrigan showed up, he said, this ? What is this ?" Warren Jack
told him to get his men in this wasn't what three grand a week was b

Harrigan told the detectives he didn't know the fuck Jackson was tal
about.

Meyer said, "You're full of shit, Mickey."

Willis went upstairs to talk to Ortega.

Shad Russell refused to discuss it on the When they met later that
night, at a on The Stem, he told her why.

"It occurs to me that perhaps you're setting up," he said.

This was already nine o'clock. The rush had peaked, but neighborhood
people were ;gling in and taking seats at tables near the where they
could watch the springtime rain the sidewalk outside. There were sti
things this city that were nice.

"You still think I'm a cop, huh?" she said.

"Or working for the cops, yes," he said.

"Setting you up for what?"

"First for dealing guns and next for dealing dope."

"Don't be ridiculous," she said.

"Maybe I am being ridiculous," he said, and shrugged. "But maybe I'm
not."

"I thought you called Houston.'" "

"I did."

"I thought you talked to Sam Seward, how could I be a cop?"

"Maybe he's in their pocket, too, the Houston cops. And maybe they g
you sewed up here, the cops here. All I know is first you come aroun
looking to buy a gun, and next thing I know you've got five hundred
and you wanna buy dope. To me, that sounds like a setup."

"Well, it isn't."

"For all I know you're wired. For all I know, you got a mike hung between your knockers. I set up a drug buy for you, I end up in a holding cell."

"I'm not wired."

"Prove it."

"How?"

"Strip," he said.

She looked at him.

She sighed heavily.

"So we're back to that again, huh?" she "No, we're not back to that again," mimicking her, "get your fuckin' mind out gutter. I call up lady friend of mine, we place, you strip for her, not me. She tells clean, we talk."

"Did you find a deal for me?" "No strippee, no talkee," he said.

"I cashed that check today," she said.

Shad looked at her and said nothing.

"I've got five hundred thousand in hundre bills."

Still he said nothing.

"Come on, don't be a jackass," she said.

"Lady," he said, and stood up, "it was meeting you."

"Sit down," she said.

"My friend lives on Darrow," he said. "Nei old Franklin Trust buildi Yes or no?-"

Marilyn was shaking her head in amazement; "Yes or no?" Shad said.

Russell's lady friend was a hooker, for sure, but apartment was tidy well-

furnished, and guessed she worked solo. Her name or it least name by which she introduced herself Joanne. This was a common hooker nar Like Tracy or Julie or Deborah. She looked to be in her d-thirties, but

Marilyn guessed she was at least a decade younger. She told Marilyn

could undress in the bathroom.

The bathroom was spotlessly clean. Through force of habit, Marilyn checked out the medicine cabinet and found several bottles of mouthwash, three boxes of condoms, and a bottle of Johnson's Baby Oil. She took her clothes and folded them neatly on the small wooden table opposite the sink.

There were two robes hanging on the back of the door. Marilyn put on one of them. Silk. The aroma of perfume clinging to it. Something she recognized but could not for the life of her name. Not a cheap scent.

She fastened the sash at her waist and came out into the bedroom wearing only the robe and her own high-heeled pumps.

Joanne looked at the robe and said, "Make yourself at home, why don't you?"

"Sorry, I thought..."

"You mind taking it off, please?"

Shad was sitting on the edge of the bed.

Marilyn looked at him.

"This is a search," Joanne said, "take off the fuckin' robe."

Shad got up, and went into the other room.

Marilyn took off the robe. Joanne looked her up and down.

"Nice," she said.

"Thanks."

"Your own?"

"Yes." "Nice," she said again. "Turn around." turned.

"Nice," Joanne said again. "You gay?"

"No."

"Bi?"

"No."

"That's a shame. Take off the shoes, Marilyn slipped out of the pumps. Joanne picked them up, felt inside each of them, tested each to see if she could

slide it away from the body shoe, and then handed the shoes back.

"I'll check your clothes," she said, and went the bathroom.

Marilyn put the robe on again, and sat on the of the bed, her legs crossed. She desperately a cigarette. In the bathroom, Joanne picked article of clothing the skirt, the blouse, the bra,. slip, the panty and patted them down. opened Marilyn's handbag, then, and whistled s found the .38.

"Shad sold that to me," Marilyn said.

"I don't want to know," Joanne said, continued rummaging through the bag. At last, snapped the bag shut, said, I'll tell him clean, you c dress now," and went oui into living room. Marilyn went into the bathroom, for her package of cigarettes, immediately one, and then closed and locked the door. In room, she could hear their muffled voices.

puffing on the cigarette and resting it on edge of the sink, she dre silently, and then flushed the cigarette down the toilet. When she walked out into the living room, Joanne was gone.

"She said we can talk here," Shad said.

"Fine."

"Sit down."

"Thanks."

He was sitting on a sofa covered with a pale blue fabric. Behind him a Van Gogh poster, all yellows and oranges and bolder blues. She too chair opposite his, crossed her legs. At the far end of the room, ra lashed the window.

"What'd you think of her?" he asked.

"Nice lady," she said.

"She told me she'd like to go down on you."

"Sorry, I'm not interested." "You're a difficult person," he said, a sighed.

"Shad, can we talk business? Please?"

"That is her business," he said, and smiled the crocodile smile. "I' glad you were clean. It really bothered me to think that maybe you w fuzz."

"Good, now let's get on with it. Have you found...?"

"Did you really cash that check?"

"Yes."

"Half a mill in hundreds, huh?"

"Yes."

"What'd they say?"

"What do you mean?"

"What'd you tell them? Why you wanted C-notes."

"They didn't ask."

"But didn't you feel funny? Getting all that in hundred-dollar bills?"

"I told them I was buying an antique vase, man wouldn't accept anything but cash"

"An antique vase, huh?"

"Yes. Ming Dynasty."

"Ming Dynasty, huh?"

"Museum quality."

"And they bought that, huh?"

"I'm a regular customer at the bank, they asked me why I wanted..."

"But you told them, anyway, huh?"

"Yes."

"Because you felt funny, right?"

"No, because it was an unusual transaction."

"And because you used to be a hooker, n Marilyn looked at him."

The rain beat a steady tattoo on the window.

"I can understand why you walked easy," he "I wasn't walking easy," said. "The knows me. But I felt my request was a bit..."

"But they don't know you used to be a hooker, Big smile on his face. Little man with a big and a big secret. She wished he'd get off this kept coming back to it, the blonde used to be hooker, what do you kn

"So did you find a deal for me?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, "I found a deal for you."

"Good. Who?"

"A man up from Colombia, I done deals with him

"

"When will it be?"

"He'll have the eleven keys by tomorrow night."

"Good. Did you tell him I wanted to pick the place?" "I told him. He didn't like it but..."

Shad shrugged and smiled again.

"Did you tell him one-on-one?" "I told him. He agreed to it."

"Where'd you leave it?"

"He'll call me tomorrow night, when he's got the stuff together. I c you, you tell me where you want him to come, he'll be there in ten minutes, provided it ain't in Siam."

"What's his name?"

"Why do you need to know that?"

"I guess I don't."

"You guess right, you don't. All you need is the money."

"After I've got the stuff..."

"Yeah, well, first you gotta get it."

"Yes. But after I have it, how long do you think it'll take to turn around?"

"Depends on who I can find. Two days Somebody to step on it it'll co you know "Yes."

"And then somebody else'll take it off hands. All in time. Two, three days."

"Because the thing is, I haven't got much you see."

"I figured."

"I'm getting a lot of pressure, you see."

"Mmm."

"So the sooner we can turn it around, the I'll be." "Oh, sure," he said.
"But first you gotta m buy, don't you?"

"Yes. But that's tomorrow night."

"Provided," Shad said.

"What do you mean provided? You tomorrow night, didn't you?"

"Yeah, to meet him."

"Yes."

"Test the stuff, taste it..."

"Yes."

"Which you don't know how to do, right?"

"Well,.. that shouldn't be a problem. You you'd..." "Yeah, I said I' teach you."

"Yes."

"To taste it," he said, and smiled.

She looked at him.

A fresh wind swept torrents of rain against the window.

"You really want me to put you in touch with this
guy, don't you?" he said.

Smiling.

She kept looking at him.

"Well, don't you?" he said.

"You know I do."

"Because this deal is very important to you, right?" "Yes," she said

"Very important," he said.

"Yes."

"Sure."

Smiling.

"Well, don't worry about it," he said.

"Everything'll be all right."

"I hope so," she said.

"Oh, sure," he said. "Provided."

His eyes met hers.

The rain and the wind rattled the window.

"Come here, baby," he said, and began unzipping his fly.

She went immediately to the door.

It was locked.

A dead bolt.

The key gone.

In prison that first time, the door had been locked from the outside. The warden El Alcaide, a squat little man wearing jodhpurs and high, brown-leather boots, a riding crop in his hand had asked her to raise her gown for him. She'd run to the door, which was locked. She'd twisted the handle, but the door wouldn't open again and again, shouting English and then "Socorro!" in Spanish, coming up behind her, the riding crop raised.

Never again, she thought.

She took the .38 from her handbag. "Unlock the door," she said.

He looked at the gun in her fist.

"Now," she said.

"You're a hooker," he said. "What's blowjob more or...9"

She almost shot him dead on the spot minute. Her finger almost tight millimeter on the trigger, she almost s brains on the wall. Instead, turned to the leveled the gun at it, and fired repeatedly wood, splintering the area around the lock. bolt upright on the sofa, his words cut off explosions, his eyes saucer wide, his fly Marilyn twis the knob, and pulled open the tearing the latch assembly from the tattered bolt still engaged in the doorframe's striker "Now there'll cops," he said, petulantly.

"Good," she said. "You explain it to them."

Doors were opening all up and down the Curious tenants who knew that hooker lived and who were expecting trouble sooner or later, it was rainy spring night. She walked past them, and went down the steps an out into the street. People who had heard the shots were gathering n the front stoop. She could hear a police siren in the distance. She walked away swiftly, through the rain.

She was thinking that now she'd have to kill the two men from Argent

The two detectives stood before Lieutenant desk like a pair of apprehensive schoolboys be birched by the headmaster. The fact that still raining that Thursday did little to help pervasive feeling of impending doom. This was last day of May. It was now two in the just five hours, the priest would have been dead full week.

Silvery rainsnakes slithered down each of lieutenant's corner window the grey beyond duller than the grey of his hair, which was short-cropped but growing increasingly whiter the years. Frowning, he sat behind his desk, folded in front of him. The knuckles were c a legacy from his youthful days as a street fi His shaggy white brows lowered over blue eyes. The rain oozed on either side of him.

"Let me hear it," he said.

"I went to see Bobby Corrente late last night," Carella said. "He's already out on bail..."

"Naturally."

"... I found him at home with his parents. I figured since we've alr got him for tearing a church apart and assaulting a priest..." "Yes, yes." Bymes said impatiently.

"But he's got an alibi for the night of the murder."

"A reliable witness?"

"His father." "Worthless," Byrnes said.

"Hooper's got an alibi, too," Hawes said. "I talked to him this morning."

"Who's his witness?"

"His sister."

"Also worthless," Byrnes said.

"But they both knew there was crack hidden inside..."

"Where was it, by the way?"

"In the holy water urn."

"Jesus," Byrnes said, and shook his head. "How about the weapon? Have you found that yet?"

"Not anywhere in the church. And we've searched it a hundred times already. The point is, if either Hooper or Corrente went back for the dope "

"Except you're just telling me they've both got alibis."

"Which you're telling me are worthless," Carella said.

"Which they are," Byrnes said. "What about Farnes' character, is that name?"

"Farnes, yes."

"What's his alibi?"

"His inventory log," Carella said.

"Which he himself dated," Hawes said.

"So far you're giving me nothing but alibis aren't alibis at all," Byrnes said. "What else have got?"

"Only more alibis that aren't alibis," Carella "This gay guy who paid the star..."

"His name again?"

"Hobbs. Andrew Hobbs. He claims he was in with a man named Jeremy Sa on the night of murder."

"Terrific ."

"We haven't been able to locate his mother..."

"Her name?"

"Abigail. I guess. He calls her Abby, I Abigail."

"Okay, Abigail Hobbs, what about her?"

"She went to Father Michael for help. We want ask her just how angry this made him."

"The son?" "Yeah. Meyer says he was still pissed about The priest wa stabbed seventeen times, Pete. anger."

"Agreed. So find her."

"We're trying."

"What about the secretary?" Byrnes asked.

"What about her?" Hawes said.

Defensively, it seemed to Carella.

"Could she have been the one the priest was diddling?" "I don't thin so," Hawes said.

"On what do you base that?"

"Well... she just doesn't seem like the sort of person who'd get involved in something like that."

Byrnes looked at him.

"She just doesn't," Hawes said, and shrugged.

"The Class Valedictorian, right?" Bymes said.

"What?" Hawes said.

"Brightest kid in the class, handsome as can be, witty, ambitious, k his mother, his father, both his sisters and his pet goldfish. But h didn't seem like that sort of person. Right?"

"Well..." "Don't give me seems," Byrnes said. "And don't tell me the

aren't any secretaries who fool around with their bosses. Find out who she was and what she was doing on the night of the murder." "Yes, sir," Hawes said.

"And locate this gay guy's mother, Hobbs, find out what the hell that's all about." "Yes, sir," Carella said.

"So do it," Byrnes said.

A good time to visit a church devoted to worshipping the Devil was on a rainy day,, guessed. As he came up the street, he saw the falling rain on the old soot-stained stones had first and very long ago been a Catholic church and then a storehouse for grain during the and briefly a Baptist church and then a workshop for sewing machines, and then a convenient place for antiques shows and crafts shows neighborhood began crumbling everywhere it. Now it was The Church of the Bornless though nothing advised the casual observer fact.

He saw only wet, sootened stones against a gunmetal sky, the outline of a building that to squat on its haunches ready to pounce, the earth by flying buttresses. He climbed flat steps to the entrance and tried the knobs doors. Both were locked. He went around the what he guessed was the rectory door. A bell was set into the stone. A tarnished brass one it read Ring for Service. He rang for And waited in the rain.

The woman who answered the door had blonde hair, a button nose dusted with freckles, eyes the color of cobalt. She was wearing blue and a white T-shirt with a tiny red devil's discreet logo over the left breast. Carella figured he'd come to the right place.

"Yes?" she said.

"I'm looking for Mr. Lutherson," he said, and showed her his shield and his I.D. card.

"You're not the one we spoke to," she said.

"No, I'm not," Carella admitted. "May I come in, please? It's a little wet out here."

"Oh, yes," she said, "excuse me, come in, come in, please."

She stepped back and away from him. She was barefoot, he noticed. They were standing in what was a small oval entrance foyer fashioned of stone and lined with niches similar to the ones at St. Catherine's, except that these were devoid of statues.

"Didn't Andrew Hobbs come talk to you?" she asked at once.

"Not to me personally," Carella said. "But, yes, he did speak to us.

"Then you know he's the one who..."

"Yes, painted the star."

"The pentagram, yes."

"Yes." "Let me tell Sky you're here," she said. "What was your name again?"

"Carella. Detective Carell."

"I'll tell him," she said, and turned and went padding off into the gloom.

He waited in the foyer. Outside a water spout splashed noisily. He wondered what they did here.

He wondered if they were breaking any laws here.

You read stories about all these sensational ritual murders, people killing people for the Devil, you began to think the whole worm was Satan. Slitting the throats of little babes, their blood into sacrificial basins. Most of these sacrificed chickens or goats, hard any of them foolish enough or reckless enough to human sacrifice. In this city, there were no such against sacrificing animals. Who was that tossing a lobster into a pot of boiling wasn't sacrifice of a s There were, however, against inhumane methods of slaughtering, you w in a mood to bust a cult that animal sacrifice, you could always nai them bullshit violation. He was not here to bust a cult, was here to learn a bit more about... "Mr. Carella?"

He turned.

A tall blond man had materialized in the fo stepping from the darkne beyond one of the portals. Like the woman who'd answered the he too wearing jeans and the white T-shirt the devil's-head logo. He, too, was barefoot. body of a weight lifter, lean and clean, Carella willing t bet next month's salary that this cat done time. A bend in the other perfect where it had once been broken. A Mick mouth. Pearly white te Eyes as blue as woman's had been, were they brother and sister?

"I'm Schuyler Lutherson," he said, smilin "welcome to The Church of Bornless One."

He extended his hand. Carella took it, and ook hands briefly. Lutherson's grip was finn and lry. Carella had read someplace that a firm, dry grip ças a sign of character. As opposed to a limp, wet ne

guessed. He was willing to bet another month's salary that a great many murderers in this world had firm, dry grips.

"Come on inside," Lutherson said, and led him through an arched port opposite the one through which he'd entered, and down a stone corridor with more empty niches in the walls, and then opened a heavy oaken door that led into a wood-paneled room that had once been a library, but which was now lined only with empty shelves. A thrift-shop desk was in the center of the room. There was a chair behind it and two chairs in front of it. A standing floor lamp with a cream-colored shade was in one corner of the room. Lutherson sat behind the desk. Carella sat opposite him.

"So," Lutherson said. "I hope you're making progress with your case."

Carella's hands tented, fingers and thumbs gently touching. Looking at Carella over his hands. Smiling pleasantly.

"Not very much," Carella said.

"I'm sorry to hear that. I thought when we offered our cooperation, we would at least, see, clear up any doubts along those lines. That anyone here at Bornless might be involved, see. In the murder of the priest."

"Uh-huh," Carella said.

"Which is why we asked him to go to the Hobbs. The minute we found out who he was who'd defaced that gate."

"As a matter of fact, he's the reason I'm here today."

"Oh?"

Blue eyes opening wide.

"Yes. We've been trying to locate his mother, but we can't find a telephone listing for her, and "Why don't you ask Hobbs?"

"We did. He doesn't know."

"He doesn't know his own mother's telephone number?"

"They don't get along. She moved six years ago, and neither of them has made any contact with each other since."

"Well, I wish I could help you, but..."

"Did Hobbs ever mention her to you?"

"No. In fact, the first time I ever spoke to was last Saturday night

"I thought he was a regular member of congregation. According to Jer Sachs..."

"Yes, I know Jer..."

"... he introduced Hobbs to your church in sometime."

"I do know Jeremy, and that may be true. people come and go, see, it transient group. A of people are attracted by the novelty of it, and they realize that this is a serious religion here, we're serious worshippers here, and they drop "But you'd never talked to Hobbs bef last Saturday."

"Correct."

"You'd seen him here, though, hadn't you?"

"Not that I can recall. But I'm sure if Jeremy says lae's been comin here since March, then I have no reason to doubt his word. It's just that I wasn't familiar with him personally."

"And so you wouldn't have any information about his mother."

"No."

"Abigail Hobbs."

"No. I'm sorry."

"You wouldn't have met her..."

"How would I have met her?"

"Well, she could have come here in an attempt to..."

"No, I've never met anyone named Abigail Hobbs."

"I guess you'd remember if she came here."

"Yes, I'm sure I'd remember."

"Before going to see Father Michael. To ask you to talk to her son, convince him to leave the church, whatever. You don't remember anyth like that, is that right?"

"Nothing like that, no. I can say very definitely that I don't know anyone named Abigail Hobbs."

"Well, thank you, Mr. Lutherson," Carella said, and sighed. "I appreciate your time."

"Not at all. Feel free to stop in whenever you like," Lutherson said and rose from behind and extended his hand again.

The men shook hands. Finn and dry, the the Devil's disciple.

"I'll show you out," Lutherson said, Carella thought happened only in movies.

She'd told him she was going to a cattle-call that afternoon and that he could meet her Alice Weiss Theater downtown at about o'clock, by which time she hoped she'd be Hawes waited under the theater marquee watch the falling rain, watching the rushing past on their way to the subway and He wanted to be going home, too. Instead, he here waiting for Krissie Lund.

Right after their meeting in the lieutenant's Carella had told him that Alexis O'Donnell a blonde woman with Father Michael on Sunday. Whether or not the blonde had been was yet another matter; there were a great many blondes in this world, including Alexis herself. bothered Hawes that might have been. whoever the blonde was, Father Michael accused her blackmail. And blackmail, known as extortion, was defined in Section 850! the state's Penal Law as "the obtaining of from another induced a wrongful use of force fear." And listed under the threats that constituted extortion was: To expose any secret affecting him.

If, for example, the blonde arguing with Father Michael on Easter Sunday had threatened to expose his love affair unless he paid her a substantial sum of money or gave her property worth money a house in the country, a diamond bracelet, an Arabian show horse this would have been blackmail.

This is blackmail, the priest had shouted.

According to Alexis O'Donnell.

Who had seen a blonde.

Blackmail, or extortion, was punishable by a maximum of fifteen years.

A long stretch up the river if you threatened to tattle unless someone paid you off. Which potential stay in the country often provided a good reason for murder. Most often, of course, it was the intended victim murdered his blackmailer. Better murder than exposure. But what if the victim threw all caution to the winds and threatened to report the blackmail attempt? Oh, yeah? Take this, you dirty rotten rat!

Not so funny when it happened in real life.

If Alexis O'Donnell had heard and seen correctly, a blonde had been Father Michael on Easter Sunday, and she had threatened him with what he'd considered blackmail. If that blonde was Krissie Lund... "Hi, how have you been waiting long?" she said, and took his arm.

Carella was waiting outside the First Fi, Savings and Trust when And Hobbs came the bank at a quarter past five that afternoon. and without an umbrella, he pulled up the his raincoat, ducked his head, and plunged into the teeming rain.

"Mr. Hobbs?" Carella said, and fell into beside him. "I'm sorry to bother you again..." "Yes, well, you are," Hobbs said.

"But we've been unable to reach your mother "I don't want to hear another word about bitch."

The rain was relentless. Both men virtually galloped through it, Hobbs obviously intent reaching the subway kiosk on the corner, merely trying to keep up. When at last they reached the sanctuary of the underground Carella grabbed Hobbs's arm, turned him and somewhat angrily said, "Wait up a minute, you?"

Hobbs was reaching into his trouser pocket subway token. His blond hair was plastered to forehead, his raincoat, trouser legs, and shoes thoroughly soaked. He shook off Carella's impatiently, found his token, glanced toward platform to see if a train was coming in, and impatiently said, "What is it you want from me?"

"Your mother's phone number."

Sodden, homeward-bound commuters rushed past on their way to the token booth and the turnstiles. Standing against the graffiti-sprayed tile wall some four or five yards away were two young men, one of them playing acoustic guitar very badly, the other sitting against the wall with a cardboard sign hanging around his neck. The sign read: WE ARE HOMELESS, THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP. Hobbs glanced again toward the platform, and then turned back to Carella and said in the same impatient voice, "I don't have her number, I already told you that. Why don't you look it up in the damn phone book?"

"We have, she's not listed."

"Don't be ridiculous. Abby not listed? Abby taking the risk of missing a phone call from a man?"

Really."

"Mr. Hobbs," Carella said, "your mother was one of the people who'd contact with Father Michael in the several weeks before his death. Would you like to talk to her."

"You don't think she killed him, do you?"

"We don't know who killed him, Mr. Hobbs.

We're merely exploring every possibility."

"Wouldn't that be a hoot! Abby killing the asshole who was supposed to save me from the Devil!"

"The point is..."

And here Carella launched into a somewhat creative improvisation, in that the real reason he wanted to talk to Abigail Hobbs was to further her son's anger and his potential violence... "... whatever Father Michael may have her, however unimportant it might have been at the time, could possibly be of enormous value to now, in retrospect, if it sheds light on even the past that could conceivably relate to the thought at the time it might have been insignificant."

Hobbs tried to digest this.

Then he said, "You're not suggesting he have confided in Abby, are you? Because frankly, Mr. Carella, that would be tantamount to confiding in a boa constrictor."

"We won't know until we talk to her, will Carella said.

"Don't you people have ways of getting numbers?"

"We do. And we tried them. The phone doesn't have a listing anywhere in the city anyone named Abigail Hobbs." "Small wonder," Hobbs said, and smiled.

Carella looked at him.

"Her name isn't Abigail Hobbs."

"Your mother's name..." "She divorced my father ten years ago," said Carella. "She's been using her maiden name ever since."

The hotel had a French name but its staff was strictly American and the maître d' in what was called the Caf du Bois said, "Bonjour, messieurs, will there be two for drinks?" Hawes didn't feel particularly

transported to Gay Paree. The maitre showed him through a glade of r
birch trees under a glass canopy, usually nourished by sunshine but
today when the rain was beating steadily overhead. At the far end of
lounge a man was playing French-
sounding songs on the piano. Krissie
slung her shoulder bag over the back of the chair, sat, tossed her h
and said, "I have to call my agent when I get a minute. She'll want
know how it went." On the way here in the rain, she'd told Hawes tha
they'd asked her to read two scenes rather than the one scene they'd
asked all the other actresses to read.

She considered this a good sign. Hawes said he hoped she'd get the p
He ordered drinks for both of them now -- the gin and tonic Krissie
requested, and a Diet Pepsi for himself since he was still on duty -
--
and then he said, "There are some questions I have to ask you, Kriss
I hope you don't mind."

"Don't look so serious," she said.

"I want you to tell me, first of all, where you were between six-
thirty
and seven-thirty on the night of May twenty-
fourth." "Oh, my," she said,
and rolled her eyes.

serious, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"That's when Father Michael was killed, "Yes."

"And you want to know where I..."

"Where you were while he was being killed, "My, my." "Yes," he said.

"What are you going to ask next? Was I affair with him?"

"Were you?" "As for where I was that night," she said, "I tell you i
minute." "Please do," he said.

"Because I write down everything in appointment calendar," she said,
swung shoulder bag around so that she could reach into, and pulled o
binder book with black covers. "Although I can't say I appreciate
inviting me for a drink under false pretenses."

"Krissie," he said wearily, "I'm investigating murder."

"Then you should have told me on the phone this was a business meeti

"I told you I..." "You said you wanted to see me," she angrily flipped pages, "not that you wanted to me to question me. Here," she said, "May," she "let's see what I was doing on the twenty-fourth, r'"

The waiter came back to the table.

"The gin and tonic?" he asked.

"The lady," Hawes said.

It occurred to him that she had not yet said whether or not she was having an affair with Father Michael.

The waiter put down her drink, and then turned to Hawes and said, "A Diet Pepsi," giving him a look that indicated real men drank booze. "Enjoy your drinks, folks," he said, and smiled pleasantly, and walked off. At the other end of the room, the piano player was playing a song about going away.

Krissie took a sip of her drink and turned immediately to her calendar again.

"May twenty-fourth," she said.

Hawes waited.

"To begin with, the twenty-fourth was a Thursday, so I was working that day, I worked at the church on Tuesdays and Thursdays, remember?"

"Yes."

"Which meant I was there from nine to five, so my first appointment at five-thirty, do you see it " here?" she said, "with Ellie, here's her name, turning the book so Hawes could see it. "That's my agent, Elli Weinberger Associates, I met her at The Red Balloon at five-thirty."

"Okay," Hawes said. He was already reading ahead in the calendar space for Thursday, the

twenty-fourth of May. On that day, Krissie's appointment was... "At eight o'clock, I met this man for was putting together an off-Broadway

famous vaudeville skits, and he wanted to talk about directing one of them. I've never before, this would have been a wonderful opportunity for me. His name is Harry met him at a restaurant called.., do you see it Eight P.M., Harry Grundle, Turner's? That's was."

"What time did you leave your agent?"

"Around six-thirty."

"Where's The Red Balloon?"

"On the Circle."

"Where'd you go when you left her?"

"Home to bathe and change for my dinner "And where's Turner's?"

"In the Quarter. Near my apartment, actually."

"Do you drive a car?"

"No."

"How'd you get from one place to the other?"

"By subway from the church to The Red I took a taxi home, and walked from my Turner's."

"Do you remember what you were wearing?"

"I wore a cotton dress to work and to meet Then I changed into somet dressier."

"Like what?"

"A blue suit, I think. Also cotton. It was a very hot day."

"What color was the dress you wore to work?"

"Blue."

"Both blue, is that it?"

"It's my favorite color," she said, and closed the book.

He was thinking that it would not have taken more than twenty minute subway from the church to Grover Park Circle. If she'd left her agen six-thirty, as she said she had, she could have been back uptown again by ten minutes to seven. The priest was killed sometime after seven. she'd still have had time to taxi downtown to meet Grundle.

He was also thinking that he would have to check with Mrs. Hennessy get a description of the dress Krissie had been wearing to work that day, and he would have to look up Harry Grundle to ask him what she' been wearing that night. Because if she hadn't gone home to bathe a

change her clothes... "How about Easter Sunday?" he said. "Does your calendar have anything for Easter Sunday?"

"I don't like you when you're this way," she said.

"What way?"

"Like every shitty cop I've ever met in my life." "Sorry," he said, "I am a cop."

"You don't have to be a shitty one."

"Where were you on Easter Sunday between two-thirty and three P.M.?"

"You know, it occurs to me that maybe I should have a lawyer here."

"Shall I read you your rights?" he asked, and she smiled. But there was something that truly hit her here. Not that she had no real alibi for the time and a half between six-thirty and eight on twenty-fourth of May, but because her attitude became so very defensive the moment he began asking questions. Maybe his technique was rough, maybe that was it. Or maybe not. "I really don't think you need a lawyer," he said. "Do you know where you were on Easter Sunday?" "Yes, of course I know where I was," she said and flipped the book open again, and said, "The hell was Easter Sunday?"

"The fifteenth, I think. Of April."

"I'm pretty sure I was in the country. My father has a house in the country. I'm pretty sure I was Easter with them." She kept flipping pages until she came to April.

"The fifteenth," she said, almost to herself.

"Yes," he said.

"I have nothing for that day," she said, and he nodded. "That's odd. Because I could swear I went to the country. I can't imagine being alone on Sunday. Unless I was in rehearsal for something. Which case..." She looked at the book again. Sure, here it is. I did a showcase on the Saturday night. I was probably learning lines Sunday before because here, do you see it?

Rehearsals began the next day, Monday the sixteenth, "

here.

She was tapping the calendar box with her forefinger.

Rehearsal, the entry read.

YMCA. 7:00 P.M. "Was anyone with you?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. We were rehearsing a scene from a new play, there were at least..."

"On Easter. While you were learning your lines."

"I believe I was alone."

"No one to cue you?"

"No, I believe I was alone."

"You didn't go up to St. Catherine's that day, did you?"

"Why would I do that?"

"I have no idea. Did you?"

"No."

"What was your relationship with Father Michael?"

"I wasn't having an affair with him, if we're back to that."

"Was there ever anything between you that went beyond a strictly business relationship?" "Yes," she said, surprising him.

"In what way?" he asked.

"I found him extremely attractive. And I suppose.., if I'm to be perfectly honest with myself... I suppose I flirted with him on occasion."

"Flirted how?"

"Well, the walk.., you know."

"What walk?"

"Well, you know how women walk when want to attract attention."

"Uh-huh."

"And eye contact, I guess. And an oc show of leg, like that. Well, y know how flirt." "Are you Catholic?" he asked.

"No."

"So you found it perfectly okay, I guess, to with a priest." "You so angry," she said, and smiled at "No, I'm not angry, I'm simply tryin to..."

"But you sound angry."

"It was okay to flirt with a priest, is that right? walk, the eye contact, the occasional show of isn't that what you called it, all t That was perfectly okay."

"Oh, come on, we've all had that fantasy, we? Nuns? Priests? What do think The Birds was all about, if not wanting to go to bed a priest? Didn't you read The Thorn Birds?" "No," he said.

"Or see the miniseries?"

"No." .

"Only everybody in the entire worm saw miniseries."

"But not me. Was that your fantasy? Wanting to go to bed with Father Michael?"

"I thought about it, yes."

"And apparently acted on it."

"Acting's a pretty good word for it, actually.

Because in many ways it was almost like playing Meggie in The Thorn Birds. Or Sadie Thompson in Rain, do you know Rain? I did it in clas last year.

You have to try all sorts of parts, you know, if you want to stretch your natural talent. These women involved with priests are very interesting. Or the Bette Davis character in Of Human Bondage, do yo know that one? He's not a priest, of course, he's a cripple, but tha sort of the same thing, isn't it? Not that I'm suggesting a priest i cripple, but only that he's a person handicapped by his vows, who ca give vent to his natural instincts or desires, his urges really, bec he's bound by these vows he's made, he's handicapped in that way.., well, he is sort of crippled, actually. So it was.., well, very interesting.

To be playing this sort of part, and to... well... observe his reactions. It made the job more interesting. I mean, the job was ver boring, you know. This made it interesting." "Sure," Hawes said.

Actresses, he thought.

"But it never went beyond that," he said.

"Never."

"You never..." "Well," she said, and hesitated.

He waited.

"I could see he was interested, you know."

"Uh-huh."

"I mean.., he was aware of me, let's put it away."

"Uh-huh."

"Watching me, you know."

"Uh-huh."

"Aware of me."

She sipped at her drink, and then loo] thoughtfully into her glass, if searching for under the lime and the ice cubes.

"I have to admit," she said, and again "If he'd made the slightest move.., if he'd that single step beyond.., you know.., looking. might have gone all the way. Because, I'll tell the truth, I'm being perfectly honest with you, scared to death of sex these days. Because of I have been to bed with anyone in the past I'm telling you the absolute truth. And I thou and maybe this is why I started it, the-flirting, know... I thought at least this would be safe.

with a priest would be completely safe."

She looked up into his face.

Her eyes met his.

"I don't know," she said, "do you think terrible?"

"Yes," he said.

But that didn't mean she'd killed him.

"I'll just get the check," he said.

Abigail Finch was a beautiful blonde woman wearing yellow tights, a black leotard top, and high-

heeled black leather pumps that added a good three inches to her already substantial height. When she let Carella into her Calm's Point apartment at seven o'clock that evening, she explained that she'd just come in from exercise class when he called and hadn't had time to change. Except for your shoes, he thought, but did not say.

Miss. Finch... "Please call me Abby," she said at once... .. had to have been at least forty (her son was, after all, in his twenties) but she looked no older than thirty-two or -three. Proud of her carefully honed appearance, she walked ahead of him into the living room, offered him a seat, asked if he'd like something to drink, and then turned to face him on the sofa, her knees touching his briefly before she repositioned herself, folding her long legs under her, placing her head demurely in her lap. There was incense burning somewhere in the room and Miss. Finch herself Abby was wearing a perfume thick with insinuation. Carella felt as if he'd inadvertently dropped into a whorehouse in Singapore. He decided he'd better get to the point fast and get the hell out of here. That was exactly how threatened he felt.

"It was good of you to see me, Miss. Finch," he said. "I'll try not to..." "Abby," she said. "Please."

"I'll try not to take up too much of your time," said. "It's our understanding..."

"Are you sure you wouldn't like a drink?"

Leaning toward him, placing one hand lightly on his shoulder, he thought.

"Thank you, no," he said, "I'm still officially on duty."

"Would you mind if I had one?"

"Not at all," he said.

She swiveled off the sofa, moved like a dancer at a bar with a dropleaf front, opened it, looked over her shoulder like Betty Grable in the World War II poster, smiled, and said, softly? "Nothing, thank you," said.

She poured something dark into a short tumbler, dropped several ice cubes into it, and came back to the sofa.

"To the good life," she said, and smiled mysteriously, as if she'd made a joke he could never hope to understand.

"Miss. Finch," he said, "it's our..." "Abby," she said, and raised her eyebrows in reprimand.

"Abby, yes," he said. "It's our understanding tha you went to see Fa Michael to ask for his assistance in..."

"Yes, in March sometime. Toward the end o March. Because I'd learned that my son was fooling around with witchcraft..."

"Well, not witchcraft, certainly..."

"The same thing, isn't it? Devil worship? Worse, in fact."

And smiled again, mysteriously.

"And you wanted his help, you wanted him to tall "

to your son... "Well, yes, would you want your son involved in such stuff?. I went to see Father Michael because Bornless was so close t St. Catherine's. And I thought if Andrew got a call from a priest.., was raised as a Catholic, you know.., it might carry some weight."

"How'd you find out your son was attending services.., if that's wha they're called..." "Masses," she said. "I guess. I forget who told m

It was someone I ran into, she said did I know my son was involved i Satanism? A woman who knew both me and Andrew."

"But why did you care?"

"I'm sorry?"

"You and your son are estranged, why'd you care what he was doing?"

"My son worshipping the Devil?" she said, looking astonished. "How w you like to have that going around town? That your faggot son is als involved in Satanism?"

"You mean.., well, I'm not sure what you mean.

Were you afraid this would reflect upon you in way?"

"Of course it would. God knows I'm not a Catholic anymore, but a per can't just forget upbringing entirely, can she?"

And smiled mysteriously again, as if mocking own words.

"So you went to see Father Michael..." said.

"Yes. That was the church I used to attend. Be: my fall from grace," said, and lowered her like a nun, and again he had the feeling that mocking him, but he could not for the life of imagine why.

"I see," he said. "And you told him..." "I told him my son was worshipping the Three, four blocks from his own church! And I him to in touch with Andrew..."

"Which he did."

"Yes."

"Which made your son very angry."

"Well, I really don't care how angry it made I just wanted him to st going to that damn church."

"And this was toward the end of March? you went to see him."

"Yes, the first time."

"Oh? Were there other times?"

"Well, I..."

Her blonderness suddenly registered on him.

That and her blatant sexuality.

"How often did you see him?" he asked.

"Once or twice."

"Including your initial visit toward the end of March?"

"Yes."

"Then it was only twice."

"Well, yes. Well, maybe three times."

"Which?"

"Three times. I guess."

"Starting sometime toward the end of March."

"Yes."

"When in March?"

"Would you mind telling me...?"

"Do you remember when?"

"Why is this important to you?" "Because he was killed," Carella said flatly.

Her look, accompanied by an almost indiscernible shrug, said what's got to do with me?

"When in March?" he asked again.

"It was a Friday," she said. "I don't remember exactly when."

Carella took out his notebook, and turned to the calendar page at the back of the book. "The last Friday in March was the thirtieth. Was that it?"

"No. Before then."

"The twenty-third?"

"Possibly."

"And the next time?"

"In April sometime."

"Can you remember the date?"

"I'm sorry, no. Look, I know the man was but..."

"Were you with him on Easter Sunday?" asked.

Sometimes, when you zeroed in that way, figured you were already in possession of the You had them. They didn't know how, but knew you already knew, and there was no lying.

"As a matter of fact, I was," she said.

Rashomon never ends.

Carella has already heard five tellings, count five, of the Easter Sunday Saga, as it is now to the entire literate world, but there is version to come and this one will be Abigail Her Story, and she is going to tell it full out, no barred, a promise and a promise that is in her first eight words: "I went there to make love him."

By that time... This is now the fifteenth day of April, blustery day that, perfect for making love in cozy stone corners of a rectory... that time, they've been doing exactly that here and there, on and off so to speak -

- for a two weeks, ever since the first of April, when went to see the priest for the second time. As reports it now, it was the in the rectory on April Fool's Day that she was mischi prompted, in spirit of the occasion, to seduce the good father. Attracted at the first meeting to his Gene Kelly smile and his breezy unpriestlike manner, she had begun wondering what he wore under that silly cassock his, and she was now determined to find out. She was astonished to learn, however... For whereas she knows she's an enormously desirable woman who takes very good care of herself, after all, not only the exercise classes, but also bicycling in the park, and milk baths for skin, she's been told by people who should know that she possibly ranks among the city's great beauties, of which there are many, well, she doesn't wish to sound immodest...

... but she was nonetheless enormously surprised, on that first day April, by his extreme state of readiness. It was almost as if some designing woman had been preparing him for her working him over, softening the ground, so to speak - because as it turned out, the good father was an absolute pushover, Little Mr. Roundheels himself, head over cassock, a flash of eye, a show of leg, and he was on her in a minute, fumbling for the buttons of her blouse and confessing that once upon a time, before he joined the ministry, he'd done it on a rooftop for the first and last time with a fourteen-year-old girl named Felicia Randall.

Abby admits to Carella now that there was something deliciously sinful about doing it with priest, something that kept her coming... "You should pardon the expression..." she said

... back to the church again and again, three, four times a week, morning and night... "I lied about only having seen him a few times in something that took her back there on Easter Sunday as well. Which, after all, is a time celebration, isn't it, Easter? The Resurrection, Christ and all that? So why not celebrate? When she is there to do on this Holy Day of the Telling of Rashomon, Easter Sunday, the fifteenth day of April in the Year of Our Lord, Amen.

She is wearing for the occasion of the priest's twelfth despoiling - she

has counted the number times they've done it since April Fool's Day -

simple woolen suit appropriate to the chill of season, beneath which a garter belt and silk pants she bought at Victoria's Secret, and sheer silk stockings and nothing else, the priest having told her on more than one occasion that he loved watching her naked breasts spill free each time she unbuttons her blouse, perhaps recalling his similar experience with the young but bountiful Felicia on the rooftop. But all to her surprise tells Abby that he wants to end it, that their relationship is filling

with guilt and remorse, that he feels a. traitor his church, his God and his sacred vows, and has even contemplated suicide... "A lot of have told me that," she said.

... so please, Ab, we must end it, this is driving rne crazy, Ab... used to call me Ab, it was a pet name..."

please, have mercy on me, let me end it, please, my dearest... "He a called me his dearest..."

which Ab, his dearest, has no intention of doing. Ending it, that is She is enjoying this too much, this sinful expedition into the darke heart of religiosity, this corruption of a priest, this sticking it God, so to speak, in his own house, oh no, she is not about to end i now. Not now when her pleasure is so fulfilling, not now when she is the peak of her ardor and he is at the peak of his delirium. So she tells him... "I told him if he ended it now, I'd let the whole world know about it."

She smiled at Carella, mysteriously.

"Which is when he started..."

"Which is when he started yelling blackmail," Carella said.

"Oh?" Abby said.

"You were heard and you were seen," Carella said, lying only a littl bit, in that Alexis hadn't seen her face.

"Well, yes, that's exactly what he started yelling.

Blackmail. This is blackmail, this is blackmail, how dare you., how silly, really! I told him it was for his own good. Because, really, was incredibly good for him." "What happened then?" Carella asked.

"Everything," Abby said. "A black kid running into the church, bleed and there pounding on the doors, and the doors caved in, bunch of wh kids came running in after him, mister, I have to tell you, I was ou the back door fast as my feet would carry me."

"When did you see him again?"

"Who?"

"Father Michael."

"Never. I figured if he wanted out, fuck him." looked up at Carella smiled.

"Would you have wanted out?" she asked.

He ignored the question.

"Where were you on May twenty-fourth six-thirty and seven-thirty?" he asked.

"I wasn't out killing a priest, that's for sure."

"Okay, now we know where you weren't," said. "Can you tell me where were?"

"Not without getting personal," she said, smiled that same infuriating mysterious smile.

"Miss. Finch..." he said.

"I was right here," she said. "All night long.

a man named Dwight Colby. Check it," she "he's in the phone book."

"Thank you," he said. "I will." "He's black," she said.

The ugly one again.

"Qu tal?"

His first words. Signaling that they would speak only in Spanish, his language. She went along with it. Tomorrow it would be over and done with.

Forever.

In Spanish, she said, "Yo tengo el dinero."

I have the money.

"Oh?" he said, surprised. "That was very fast."

"I met with my contact last night. The deal is too complicated to explain, but..."

"No. Explain it."

"Not on the telephone. You can understand that.

Let me say only that it turned out to be simpler than I thought it would."

"Well, that's very nice, isn't it?"

Forced joviality in his voice.

Pero, eso est6 muy bien, no?

"Yes," she said. "Can you come here tomorrow afternoon?"

"I'm not sure we want to come there," he said.

"You live in a dangerous place. A person can get hurt in that place.

Reminding her that there was still an additional debt she owed. For cutting of the handsome one.

The two million would pay for the killing of Alberto Hidalgo... mayb
But she knew the ugly one would not be content until the cutting was paid for as well.

Machismo was invented by Spanish-speaking people. So was venganza.

"Well, I'm sorry," she said, "but I'm not about to go out on the str
carrying two million cash."

Show them the green.

"You have the full amount, eh?"

"All of it."

"In what denominations?"

"Hundreds."

"How many hundreds?"

He almost trapped her. She surely would counted that much money, she
surely would known how many hundred-
dollar bills there were two million
dollars. Her mind clicked like calculator. Drop two zeros, you come
with... "Twenty thousand," she said at once, and embroidered the lie
"Two hundred banded hundred bills in each stack." "Good," he said.

"Can you be here at three tomorrow?"

Willis would be working the day watch a He'd leave here at a quarter
past eight, and wouldn't be home till four-fifteen, four-thirty.

that time it would be finished.

"Three-thirty," he said.

"No, that's too..."

"Three-thirty," he repeated.

"All right," she said, sighing. "You'll have minutes to count the money and get out."

"I hope there won't be any tricks this time," said.

The word *trucos* meant only that in *S Tricks*. It did not have the secondary or tertiary meanings it had in English, where a trick was either a prostitute's client or the service she performed for him. He was not making veiled reference to either her own or his uncle's former occupations. Too much the gentleman for that. No Shad Russell here, man's mind wasn't in the gutter. He was simply warning her not to come up with any surprises.

"No guns," he said, "no knives, eh?"

Reminder of the debt again.

The cutting of the handsome one.

"No tricks," she said. "I just want this over and done with."

"Yes, so do we."

The something in his voice again. The promise.

Running deep and dark and icy cold beneath the surface of his words.

"I'll see you at three-thirty tomorrow," she said, and hung up.

And realized all at once that she was trembling.

He went back to the church again at noon that the first day of June. He had called ahead to ask if he could look through the dead priest's files again, Father Oriella had told him it would be no bother at all, he himself had a meeting at the downtown, and would be out of the office most of the day. "If you need any assistance," he'd "just ask Marcella Bella."

Marcella Palumbo, as it happened, was out lunch when Carella got there. It was Mrs. Henness who let him into the rectory and then took him to the small office. Where there had been scattered all over the floor the night of the fire and cartons stacked everywhere when the new was moving in, there was now order and a sure sense of control.

"What is it you're looking for?" Mrs. Henness asked.

"I'm not sure," Carella said.

"Then how will you know where to look?"

Good question.

He was here, he guessed, to do paperwork again.

To some people, Hell was eternal flames, and to others it was getting caught in midtown traffic, but to Carella it was paperwork. He was being punished now for having walked out of church without having said his penance all those years ago. A vengeful God was heaping more paperwork on him.

He asked Mrs. Hennessy if she knew where Father Oriella had put the calendar, checkbooks, and canceled checks that had been returned to by the police. She said she thought Mrs. Palumbo had filed them in the M-

Z file drawer, though she had no idea why the woman had put them there since checks and calendars both started with a C, so why hadn't she put them in the A-C drawer? Carella had no idea, either. But sure enough, there they were, at the front of the M-Z drawer. He thanked Mrs. Hennessy, declined her offer of a cup of coffee, sat down at the desk and began going through the material yet another time.

As earlier, the priest's appointment calendar told him nothing of importance. On the day of his murder, he had celebrated masses at eight A.M. and twelve noon, and then had done the Miraculous Medal Novena following the noon mass. He had met with the Altar Society Auxiliary two, and the Rosary Society at four. He was scheduled to meet with the Parish Council at eight that night, presumably after dinner, and an appointment he kept. That was it for the twenty-fourth day of Carella. He skimmed back through the pages for preceding week. Again, there was nothing seemed significant.

He put the appointment calendar aside, took St. Catherine's Roman Catholic Church checkbook from the drawer, and began going through the stubs for checks the priest had during the month of May. Here again were checks for photocopying and garage, mortgage maintenance, medical insurance, flower.. missalettes, and so on. Carella turned to the stubs for May 24.

The first stub on the page was numbered 5699. a hand that was not Father Michael's, and Carella assumed to be Kristin Lund's, the recorded check had been written to Macauley Tree Care, Inc. for spraying done in the amount of \$37.50. As he'd done last Friday in the squadroom, Carella now went down the one after the other, all of them dated May 24,

numbered sequentially:

5700

To: US Sprint For: Service thru 5/17

\$176.80

5701

To: Isola Bank and Trust For: June mortgage \$1480.75

5702

To: Alfred Hart Insurance Co.

For: Honda Accord LX, Policy # HR 9872724

\$580.00

5703

To: Orkin Exterminating Co. Inc.

For: May services \$36.50

5704

To: The Wanderers For: Band deposit \$100.00

That was the last check Father Michael had written on the day of his murder.

Carella closed the checkbook.

Nothing.

Paperwork, he thought. That's why he was here.

Punishment. The ransacked G-
L file. The eighth circle of Hell would be
going through that another time, and trying to discern what was mi.
it. Because no one zeros in on a single file, that file drawer out,
searches through that file .] haste, tosses papers recklessly into t
room a onto the floor, unless that someone is looking f something. A
if the something had in fact be found and taken from the priest's
office, then t something may have been the reason for the murder. So
perhaps if he studied the papers in as they'd been filed, he might
discover a break in continuity, a lapse, a gap, a hole in the record
then, by studying the surrounding papers, and using his admittedly w

powers of reasoning, he hoped he might be able to figure what the purloined something had been. In short, planned to study the doughnut order to define hole.

It occurred to him that Father Oriella might have replaced the dead priest's G-L file with a G-L file of his own. But no, the fastidious Marcella had refilled the dead priest's papers exactly where they'd been on the night of murder, there to be consulted whenever or if ever his successor had needed to look something concerning the church. Marcella opened the drawer the bottom one on the left took out the first hanging folder in line, made himself comfortable at the desk again, and began going through the folders one by one.

He thought, at one point, that he'd found a meaningful absence in a file labeled GUTTERS.

Last autumn, Father Michael had been in correspondence with a man named Henry Norton, Jr., at a firm called Norton Brothers Seamless Gutter Company, regarding the repair and possible replacement of the church leaders and gutters. He had written a letter on September 28, making an appointment with Mr. Norton to visit the site and give an estimate, then he'd written another letter on October 11, stating that he would like to see a written estimate in addition to the verbal estimate Mr. Norton had given him after his visit, and then a further letter on October 16, stating that he was now in receipt of the written estimate and that this would serve as agreement to the terms. It closed saying he would be looking forward to word as to when the actual work would commence. The missing document was the written estimate Father Michael said he'd received. It turned out, however, that the estimate had been misfiled. Marcella ran across it later, in a folder labeled HOLY NAME SOCIETY.

There it was. On a Norton Brothers Seamless Gutter Company letterhead. An estimate of \$1,036 to repair the leaders and gutters at St. Catherine's Church.

Filed between the minutes of the Holy Name Society meetings for January and February of this year.

The last folder in the file was a hefty one labeled LENT.

Marcella read every last document in that folder.

There was nothing else in the G-L drawer.

Sighing heavily, he replaced the folder in bottom file drawer, and pushed the drawer back into the cabinet. It did not close all the way. He

open again. Eased it shut. It still would not completely. An inch or more of the drawer jutted from the cabinet frame. He opened the drawer and checked the slide mechanism. The drawer seated firmly on its rollers, nothing seemed to snagging. So what the hell...?

He tried closing it again. It slid back into cabinet and then abruptly stopped. Something at back of the drawer, or perhaps behind the was preventing it from sliding all the way into cabinet. He opened the drawer again, got down his hands and knees, leaned in over the drawer reached in behind it. Something was stuck there. He couldn't see what was, but... He yanked back his hand in sudden searing

A thin line of blood ran across his fingertips.

The something back there was a knife.

He had found the murder weapon.

The defense attorney, a man named Oscar Loring, leaned in closer to Willis and said, "And what was this, exactly, Detective?"

He had a bristly mustache and the breath of a lion who'd just eaten warthog. It was now a quarter to three. Willis had been on the stand an hour and a half this morning, and had been on again since two o'clock, when court had reconvened. Trying to explain, first, why he requested a no-knock warrant, and next why he'd shot a man who'd tried to kill him with an AR-15. This had been in October of last year, during a raid on a stash pad. The case had just come to trial. Loring was attempting to show that Willis had lied on his affidavit making application for the search warrant, that he'd had no reasonable cause to believe there'd be either weapons or contraband material in the suspect apartment, and that in fact he'd planted both the weapons and the contraband after he'd kicked in the door!

He now wanted to know exactly what time it was that Willis and Bob O'Brien and four uniformed cops from CPEP had kicked in the door to apartment.

"It was nine o'clock in the morning," Willis said.

"Exactly nine o'clock?" Loring asked.

"I don't know if it was exactly. We had the raid scheduled for nine o'clock, it's my belief we were assembled by nine and went in at nine

"But you don't know if it was exactly..." "Excuse me," the judge said "but where are you going with this?"

His name was Morris Weinberg, and he had a bald head fringed with sp white sideburns, and he was fond of telling people that he'd lost al his hair the moment he'd been appointed to the bench.

"Your Honor," Loring said, "it's essential to client's case that we at exactly what illegal entry was..."

"Objection!"

The prosecuting attorney. Bright young guy the D.A.'s office, hadn't Loring get away with i much as an inch of bullshit.

"Sustained. What difference will it make, Loring, if the police went at a minute before or a minute after nine? What possible... ?"

"If Your Honor will permit me..."

"No, I'm not sure I will. You've kept this on the stand for almost t and a half hours picking at every detail of a raid he and policemen under protection of a warrant duly signed by a justice of the Court. You've questioned his integrity, his his methods, and everything but legitimacy birth, which I'm sure you'll get around to the. "

"Your Honor, there is a jury pres..."

"Yes, I'm aware of the jury. I'm also aware of fact that we're wasti great deal of time here, that unless you can tell me why it's so important pinpoint the time of entry, then I will have to ask' to le off this line of questioning." "Your Honor," Loring said, "my client awake and eating his breakfast at nine o'clock."

"So?"

"Your Honor, this witness claims they kicked the door at nine o'clock and found my client in bed.

Asleep, Your Honor."

"So?"

"I'm merely suggesting, Your Honor, that if the detective is willing perjure himself on..."

"Objection!"

"Sustained. Now cut that out, Mr. Loring. You know better than that.

"If the detective is mistaken about what actually happened on the morning of the raid, then perhaps he made a similar mistake regardin cause."

"Are you referring to probable cause for the search warrant?"

"Yes, Your Honor."

"Detective Willis," Weinberg said, "why did you believe there were weapons and contraband materials in that apartment?"

"An undercover police officer had made several buys there, Your Honor in advance of the raid. Of a controlled substance, namely cocaine. As he reported seeing weapons there. Of a type, I might add, that was familiar to us the moment we entered the apartment."

"What's his name? This undercover officer?"

"Officer Charles Seaver, Your Honor."

"His precinct?"

"Same as mine, Your Honor. The Eight-Seven."

"Does that satisfy you as to probable cause, Mr. Loring?"

"I'm just hearing of this, Your Honor. This not stated on Detective Willis's petition for a..." "I said information based on my personal knowledge and belief..."

"You didn't mention a police officer..."

"What difference does it make? The warrant granted, wasn't it? I went into that damn with a..."

"Just a minute now, just a minute," said.

"Sorry, Your Honor," Willis said.

"Can we get Officer Seaver here this afternoon Weinberg asked.

"I'd need time to prepare, Your Honor," Loft said.

"Tomorrow morning, then. Be ready to call him nine A.M."

"Your Honor..."

"This court is adjourned until nine A.M. morning," Weinberg said, and banged his gavel, abruptly stood up.

"All rise!" the Clerk of the Court shouted, everyone in the courtroom stood up as swept out like a bald Batman, trailing his black behind

The clock on the wall read 2:55 P.M. They were due at three-thirty.